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PUBLISHER

TRACY BAIM

EDITORS IN CHIEF

SUJAY KUMAR, KAREN HAWKINS

CREATIVE LEAD

RACHEL HAWLEY

MUSIC EDITOR

PHILIP MONTORO

THEATER AND DANCE EDITOR

KERRY REID

CULTURE EDITOR

BRIANNA WELLEN

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

JAMIE LUDWIG

SENIOR WRITERS

MAYA DUKMASOVA, LEOR GALIL, DEANNA ISAACS, BEN JORAVSKY, MIKE SULA

EDITORIAL ASSOCIATE

S. NICOLE LANE

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

AMBER HUFF

LISTINGS COORDINATOR

SALEM COLLO-JULIN

CONTRIBUTORS

ED BLAIR, NOAH BERLASKY, LUCA CIMARUSTI, MARISSA DE LA CERDA, MARI COHEN, JOSH FLANDERS, SHERI FLANDERS, JACK HELBIG, IRENE HSAIO, CATALINA MARIA JOHNSON, MONICA KENDRICK, STEVE KRAKOW, NOËLLE D. LILLEY, JAMIE LUDWIG, MAX MALLER, ADAM MULLINS-KHATIB, J.R. NELSON, JEFF NICHOLS, MARISSA OBERLANDER, MATTHEW SIGUR, CATEY SULLIVAN

DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL

JOHN DUNLEVY

SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR

JANAYA GREENE

STAFF AND SPECIAL PROJECTS

ASSISTANT TARYN ALLEN

STRATEGIC INNOVATION DIRECTOR

MARIAH NEUROTH

DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

COLETTE WILLARD

MEDIA PARTNERSHIPS COORDINATOR

YAZMIN DOMINGUEZ

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

SANDRA L. KLEIN

SPECIAL EVENTS CONSULTANT

KRISTEN KAZA

ADVERTISING

312-392-2970, ADS@CHICAGOREADER.COM

CLASSIFIEDS:

CLASSIFIED-ADS@CHICAGOREADER.COM

VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES

AMY MATHENY

CLIENT RELATIONSHIP MANAGER

TED PIEKARZ

SENIOR ACCOUNT REPRESENTATIVES

LENI MANAA-HOPPENWORTH, LISA SOLOMON

CLASSIFIED SALES MANAGER

WILL ROGERS

NATIONAL ADVERTISING

VOICE MEDIA GROUP 1-888-278-9866

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JOE LARKIN AND SUE BELAIR

DISTRIBUTION CONCERNS

distributionissues@chicagoreader.com

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CHICAGO READER L3C

BOARD PRESIDENT

DOROTHY R. LEAVELL

TREASURER

EILEEN RHODES

SECRETARY

JESSICA STITES

AT-LARGE

SLADJANA VUCKOVIC

CONSULTANT

CAROL E. BELL

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THIS WEEK ON CHICAGOREADER.COM



‘Fighting for my future’

Inside the 19-hour occupation of the University of Chicago Police headquarters

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

CHANGES AT THE READER



A new future

The changes to the news industry have been devastating, some have said extinction level, in the past few years, recently accelerated by the COVID-19 crisis. We at the *Chicago Reader* have an “adapt-or-die” approach to this and other challenges that arise. We have kept our editorial team together, without layoffs or furloughs, and we want to pivot strongly into the next phase of media, and the *Reader*.

The *Reader*, the nation’s first free weekly newspaper, is moving to a biweekly print schedule effective July 9, with a renewed focus on digital content and storytelling, and a refreshed special issues calendar. All that you love about the *Reader* will be intact, and the biweekly issues will be a curated version of what’s new, now, and next in the city culturally, politically, and beyond.

The print paper will continue to have more than 50,000 copies delivered to nearly 1,200 locations around the city, and our digital presence will build off of the more than 600,000 unique monthly visitors to our website, 43,000 e-mail newsletter subscribers, and more than 400,000 social media followers.

Founded in 1971, the *Reader* has gone through several ownership changes over the past decade, and most recently has applied to the IRS for 501(c)(3) status that would usher in ownership

by a newly formed nonprofit, the Reader Institute for Community Journalism. That application is pending, and the *Reader* is currently an L3C, mission-driven company.

The *Reader* is undergoing a complete digital makeover in 2020, with a new website and other digital channels to come.

This was not an easy decision. We wanted to focus on the current strengths of the paper. This is the right time to streamline costs to keep our team together, and to adapt to new revenue sources as we plan the 50th anniversary celebrations of the *Reader* in 2021.

“We are so proud of the *Reader*’s legacy as an alt-weekly, and I’m honored that all of us have been part of its history as a weekly publication,” said coeditor in chief Karen Hawkins. “As much as we would love to continue bringing our readers a weekly print paper, we know that this is the best path forward for the future. We’re grateful to still be here—and still kicking ass—when so many of our colleagues are not. Our print publication schedule is changing, but our commitment to being Chicago’s premier alternative news source has not.”

For more details on the *Reader*, see chicagoreader.com, and for ways to support see chicagoreader.com/support.

—TRACY BAIM, PUBLISHER

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FOOD & DRINK



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FOOD FEATURE

Farmer Vera Videnovich is raising Balkan sisters the Native American way

She's bringing corn, beans, and squash back to where they came from.

By **MIKE SULA**

Baba Petra was getting old. She wanted to see her family in her village near Banja Luka again, so during the middle of the Bosnian War in the early 90s, she left her Chicago garden to go back home and say goodbye.

She came back with beans.

Baba (or “Grandma”) Petra, was a family friend of Vera Videnovich, whose Serbian father left his maintenance job in Chicago in 1962 and built a 25-acre farm in Berrien County in western Michigan, planting crops from seeds brought back from the old country.

“They started growing things they couldn’t buy in the stores, raising sheep, or the type of peppers we like to eat,” says Videnovich, who, along with her two brothers, still works the land and raises sheep (23 babies this spring). Up until three years ago, she was a reliable presence at Chicago farmer’s markets, and she’s since taken a job running horticulture

programs for developmentally challenged adults. Until last season, her produce still made regular appearances on menus at restaurants such as Lula, Giant, and Café Marie-Jeanne.

Back in the day, Baba Petra and her daughter regularly helped out on the farm, so when she returned from Bosnia, she gave Videnovich a backup stash of black pole beans specific to the region that she smuggled back in a pair of socks. “It was just to keep the seeds going if she lost her stash,” says Videnovich. “We cook them in a stew with garlic, tomatoes, and maybe some beef.”

It’s a good thing she shared them, because not long after her return, Baba Petra succumbed to a stroke. Videnovich, at the time a typesetter at the *Reader*, planted the beans and saved them every year to keep the supply going. But over time, her stash diminished—when mice invaded, an extra-damp winter set in, or

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FOOD & DRINK

Taking three companion crops back to their roots
by VERA VIDENOVICH

she got too focused on other crops.

But she, like her father, is a seed saver. The beans remained on a shelf in a cardboard box, even as she befriended a monk from a monastery in Grayslake who gifted her a supply of seeds that produce the *bundevara*, a sweet, white-fleshed pumpkin typically made into a strudel across the Balkans. “He brought all these seeds in pill bottles,” she says. “He had melons, squash, peppers, tomatoes, pepper, flowers, onions. This other priest saw us chatting and he’s like, ‘You’re selling drugs.’”

Something came full circle two autumns ago when Videnovich traveled to Turin, Italy, as a delegate for the biennial Slow Food International Terra Madre conference. “Everybody was just like me,” she says. “Three thousand delegates from every corner of the planet.” Among them was a contingent from the Balkans that included a woman who tossed two handfuls of dried corn into Videnovich’s purse, representing two light-colored varieties that had been bred for milling and incorporating into recipes little known outside of individual families (but most notably the polenta-like porridge known as *kachamak*).

Videnovich traveled on to Serbia and Macedonia on the same trip and visited family, farms, and green markets, the corn bouncing around the bottom of her bag along with her sunglasses and loose change.

In the Balkans, these corn varieties aren’t typically eaten with beans or squash, nor are they grown together, something she realized was a practice adapted by Europeans after they brought them over from their indigenous habitat—America.

Native Americans knew centuries ago that if you grow corn, beans, and squash together in the same plot, the corn acts as a space-saving trellis for the beans to climb, while in return they fix nitrogen in the soil for the corn. Meanwhile, the prickly squash vines discourage raccoons from raiding the corn and shade out the weeds. This method of companion planting is known as the Three Sisters and originated in Mesoamerica before spreading all over North America, including to the Potawatomi land in western Michigan where the Videnovich farm now stands.

“I thought, ‘This is fantastic,’” she says. “This is New World corn. I’m in the New World. Let’s see if we can adapt it back.”

In recent years Videnovich scaled back her production on the farm due to her day job, but

this season she carved out time to grow just for seed saving, including some 15 varieties of tomatoes, sweet Turkish peppers, Greek and Persian melons, and a few other types of Balkan beans and peppers. “It’s like I’m pretending I’m traveling,” she says. “I think that’s why I do it. I want to travel but I can’t, so I’m recreating what I imagine the food would be where I would go.”

She’s only growing a handful of each variety to see what comes up and to cook with them, and share with friends in exchange for feedback. Due to the pandemic and the drastically reduced restaurant market, she’s growing about a quarter of what she normally would.

So she has lots of time to focus on the three sisters. In March, Slow Food West Michigan awarded her a \$300 biodiversity microgrant meant to support small farmers cultivating heritage varieties and breeds, and she planted two 50-foot rows of Balkan beans, corn, and squash the Native American way. This season she’ll let them all grow to maturity to build up her seed reserve, and if that goes next season, she thinks she can bring the produce to market while continuing to save seeds.

It is a bit of a gamble. The squash seeds and beans are a few years old, which isn’t ideal, and could result in poor yields. But she’ll be keeping careful records on how well the plants grow and how much they produce so that information could be passed on to someone else who wants to give it a go.

She says much of the grant money is meant to document and promote the work of saving these varieties, but the cooking demos she planned for each of the sisters won’t be happening at harvest. Still, she’ll be blogging about the project and documenting it on social media (she’s on Twitter and Instagram), and hopes to produce enough seeds to distribute to home and community gardeners, Serbian churches, and to replenish her friend at the monastery’s stash.

And maybe, in a bright and distant future, she’ll get some of them on the menus of her old restaurant customers. But that’ll have to wait. “I don’t even want to contact my chefs right now,” she says. “Everyone’s in pain. I don’t want to put any pressure on them. I have income from my day job. I can take a hit on my farm this year.

“I don’t mind the labor it takes because I don’t want to lose this. Histories are merging. I understand the land I farm had been part of a whole other culture, and it should be respected.” 

 @MikeSula



The advertisement for Virtue Cider features a central image of a pear bottle of Virtue Cider. The bottle is surrounded by lush green leaves and several ripe pears. Above the bottle, the brand name "VIRTUE" is written in a large, elegant, black serif font, with "CIDER" in a smaller, simpler font below it. A red apple logo with a white "V" is positioned above the brand name. The bottle label includes the text "VIRTUE, IT'S AT OUR CORE", "CIDER WITH PEARS", "VIRTUE CIDER", "PEAR", and "PROPER FARMHOUSE CIDER". Below the bottle, the words "PEAR UP!" are written in a large, bold, black sans-serif font. Underneath that, the text "FROM OUR FARM TO YOUR DOOR" and "ORDER ONLINE" are displayed in a bold, black sans-serif font, followed by the website "VIRTUECIDER.COM". At the bottom, the text "FOLLOW US @VIRTUECIDER FOR A PEAR UP GIVEAWAY" is written in a bold, black sans-serif font. At the very bottom of the advertisement, in small print, it says "ENJOY RESPONSIBLY © 2020 Virtue Cider, Fennville, MI 49408".

NEWS & POLITICS



It's hard to believe Americans would reelect a man who sounds this crazy, but that doesn't mean they won't. ALBERT HALIM / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

POLITICS

Trump in Tulsa

Get off the couch, America, we've got a racist despot to defeat.

By BEN JORAVSKY

One of the highlights of my Father's Day celebration was reading press coverage of President Trump's colossal bust of a campaign rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

For future historians, that would be the rally of Saturday, June 20, 2020, in which Trump returned to the campaign trail after taking the last three months off because of the pandemic.

Future historians should also note that I read three accounts of that rally as I lay on my living room couch, listening to Stanley Turrentine booming over the stereo. Stan the Man will blast Trump away any day.

Not sure which was my favorite part of the

coverage, with there being so much to choose from.

Was it the rows and rows of empty blue seats?

Or was it that Trump had to cancel plans to have a separate outside stage for the overflow crowd—as there was no crowd overflowing?

Or that Trump was steaming mad because of the low turnout?

Or that in desperation to spin away the embarrassment, Trump's handlers blamed the low turnout on the “fake media” scaring people away with news about COVID-19 and counter-protesters? As though MAGA—as Trump calls his diehards—listen to CNN or read the *New York Times*.

Or that Trump and his aides had bragged of the millions who registered to attend the rally, only to learn that many of those who registered were teenage TikTokers and K-pop stans who had no intention of attending?

Or that one leader of the TikTok rebellion was Mary Jo Laupp, a 51-year-old Mayor Pete supporter from Fort Dodge, Iowa, who had this vision of the “19,000-seat auditorium barely

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filled . . . leaving Trump standing there alone on the stage?”

Way to go, Mary Jo!

Or that I’m so proud of myself for knowing that the word “stans” originates from “Stan,” a song by Eminem about an insanely obsessive fan?

A song that featured Elton John singing the chorus when Eminem performed at the Grammys in 2001. I’m still a little irritated at Sir Elton for lending credibility to Eminem when he was doing all that gay-bashing. Though, in retrospect, I really think it’s time I let that one go.

Back to that bust of a Trump rally . . .

About 6,200 people attended the rally, according to the Tulsa fire department, even though the arena can fit 19,000.

If this had been an election, the empty seats would have won in a landslide. Unless, of course, it was a presidential election. In which case, the filled seats would be declared the winner by the electoral college and get to fill Supreme Court vacancies.

Definitely not letting that one go anytime soon.

As much as I loved the TikTok and K-pop crowds for messing with Trump, I think their role in the low turnout is overstated.

I think MAGA didn’t show up ’cause they were afraid of catching COVID-19.

I realize that a central tenet of MAGA is that the pandemic is a hoax created by Democrats, China, and the mainstream media to turn the country against Trump.

But it’s hard to maintain that delusion when Trump’s asking you to sign a waiver absolving his campaign of any liability in the event you catch the disease while attending his rally—a waiver the Trump campaign asked Tulsa attendees to sign.

Apparently, there’s a list of things MAGA won’t do for their supreme leader—with dying of COVID-19 being high on that list.

Eventually, I got around to watching Trump’s speech. It was like watching a flabby, old rock star with a comb-over regurgitating his greatest hits.

He ripped the mainstream media, bragged about building a wall, called Joe Biden sleepy, denounced anarchists and radicals, made no mention of George Floyd, and went on a

bizarre—even for Trump—15-minute explanation of why he’s not really a doddering old man. Even though he looks like one half the time.

As in the following discourse on COVID-19, which comes directly from the transcript:

“We’ve tested now 25 million people. It’s probably 20 million people more than anybody else. Germany’s done a lot; South Korea’s done a lot. They call me, they say the job you’re doing—here’s the bad part, when you test of—when you do testing to that extent, you’re going to find more people, you’re going to find more cases. So, I said to my people, ‘Slow the testing down, please.’ They test and they test . . .

“Even though he’s very liberal, the governor of New Jersey, right? Do you know him? Now, listen. He said to me something that’s amazing. New Jersey was very heavily hit, very hard hit, thousands of people. He said, with thousands of people that died, thousands of people, there was only one person that died under the age of 18, would you believe that? Which tells me one thing, that kids are much stronger than us. When you see a little kid running around, say, ‘Boy, oh, boy, do you have a great immune

system. How about a piece of your immune system?’ They don’t even know about this. Let’s open the schools, please, open. Open the schools.

“And every once in a while, I’ll have one of these days where I’m hit left and right, left and right, like, even this great event. What—if you could have seen outside or you could have heard the reports. The reports, ‘Oh, it’s COVID, it’s this—I’ve got—by the way, it’s a disease without question has more names than any disease in history. I can name kung flu. I can name 19 different versions of names. Many call it a virus, which it is. Many call it a flu, what difference?”

And they say Biden’s demented?

Look, just because it’s hard to believe that America would reelect a man who sounds this crazy doesn’t mean we should get complacent.

It’s time to get off the couch and get to work. Register to vote. Register others to vote. Campaign in the swing states. Do what you have to do. We’ve got a racist despot to defeat. **✎**

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CULTURE

Fault lines at the Field and Poetry Foundation

Issues of diversity and economic justice become flash points.

By **DEANNA ISAACS**

In the last week or so, on the cusp of the city's partial reopening, there was a cluster of cancellations from its largest venues and events. The 2020 season is over, at least as far as live, in-house performance goes at Lyric Opera, Joffrey Ballet, Ravinia, and the Grant Park Music Festival. Pull up the covers and go back to sleep; maybe we'll see you next year.

Or maybe we won't. If we don't have an effective vaccine by then, crowds at the big legacy cultural venues will be thinner than the Trump turnout in Tulsa. Too sparse for sustainable operation.

And those that survive are likely to be changed. Under the triple onslaught of pandemic, economic disaster, and civic unrest,

our elitist, donor-dependent cultural sector is showing stress, cracking at old fault lines that are economic and political as well as racial. Take, for example, recent turmoil at two bastions of Chicago's cultural establishment: the walled Gold Coast fortress of the Poetry Foundation and the venerable Field Museum.

Like nearly every other organization and corporation, the Poetry Foundation responded to the murder of George Floyd—or, rather, the protests over the murder of George Floyd—with a statement denouncing “injustice and systemic racism.” Its four-sentence message, issued June 3, said the Foundation and its magazine, *Poetry*, “recognize that there is much work to be done” and are

Anna Villanyi outside the Field ANNA VILLANYI

committed to “engaging in this work,” while acknowledging that “real change takes time and dedication.”

Translation: this is going to be so hard for us, don't expect it to happen anytime soon.

But poets know how to parse a few lines. An open letter on June 6, signed by 27 Poetry Foundation fellows and three poets who work with the Foundation (including University of Chicago's Eve Ewing) noted that, “Given the stakes, which equate to no less than genocide against Black people, the watery vagaries of this statement are, ultimately, a violence.”

They also observed that for years, “your constituents have been calling on the Foundation to redistribute more of its enormous resources to marginalized artists” and to make change in the “local community and beyond.” (Most recently, a separate April 4 petition, originally asking the Foundation to establish a \$5 million fund to help poets, publishers, bookstores, and literary organizations struggling because of the coronavirus has attracted more than 2,600 signatures.)

The poets listed demands including specific plans for supporting racial justice; “large contributions” to anti-racist organizations; and “acknowledgment of the debt that the Foundation owes to Black poets” as well as recognition of “harm done” to poets who are Latinx, disabled, and LGBTQ. They called for a more diverse staff and for the replacement of president Henry Bienen and board chair Willard Bunn III. Without these changes, they vowed to no longer allow themselves to be exploited by working with, or for, the Foundation, or being published in *Poetry* magazine. They gave the Foundation a week to respond and posted the letter, which was promptly cosigned by more than 1,800 other poets and readers.

By June 10, both Bienen and Bunn had resigned. Bienen—a former Northwestern University president—exited blaming his staff, complaining in a resignation letter to the board (as reported by the *Chicago Tribune*), that, “I have lost respect for the staff . . . it was their work, not mine, that they found they could not defend.”

Which may be what inspired Red Rover poetry series founders Jennifer Karmin and Laura Goldstein to take the poets' demands a step further last week, calling for the eradication of this apparently superfluous job. The president's salary and benefits—\$436,000 in 2018 (the most recent record available)—

they suggest could be better spent on free community programs.

On June 12, the Foundation staff issued an apology “for our silence in the face of crisis,” an acknowledgment of their “privileged identities,” and a list of corrective actions underway.

Meanwhile, at the Field Museum staff members reacted to the announcement last month of likely job and salary cuts by presenting management with a petition asking for a moratorium on layoffs, staff input on cost-cutting plans, and—if salary cuts became necessary—a graduated scale, so that higher earners would share an equitable amount of the pain.

Museum education coordinator Anna Villanyi says that employees had suggested options that might reduce the need for layoffs, “but those were generally dismissed and, during an online staff meeting, our president noted specifically that taking graduated pay cuts at a steeper level for higher earners would be an empty gesture.” (A museum spokesperson says Field president and CEO Richard Lariviere meant that “the deficit that the museum was trying to overcome due to COVID was so large that reducing executive pay wouldn't help.”)

“That was disheartening,” and a catalyst for bringing the staff together to try to be heard, Villanyi says. Nevertheless, on June 12, after benefiting from federal PPP money, and from more than \$200,000 worth of vacation time that Field employees donated to avoid layoffs for their coworkers, Lariviere announced that 71 jobs were being eliminated, another 56 employees were being furloughed, and an across-the-board pay cut of 10 percent was going into effect immediately for anyone making more than \$20 per hour. (Workers making between \$16 and \$20 per hour would be docked \$1 an hour.)

According to the announcement, a previous pay cut for “top earners” had already been implemented. The announcement didn't reveal the size of that cut, but it was also 10 percent, and only kicked in on earnings over \$100,000. In 2018 Lariviere's own total compensation was \$796,000.

In theory, equity is one of the Field's priorities, Villanyi says: “We're trying to build to a more equitable future in access to the museum and in everything to do with our work. And this looks like an example of something that is not happening equitably.”

@Deannalsaacs



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The first ever Pride march on Saturday, June 27, 1970. © COURTESY GARY CHICHESTER

HISTORY

‘It was really a freeing kind of feeling’

Gary Chichester reflects on the riotous roots of the first-ever Pride parade.

By **DEVLYN CAMP**

A young, conservative homosexual from the northwest suburbs was cruising in Lincoln Park in the summer of 1968. “I loved cruising,” says Gary Chichester, the cofounder of the Chicago Gay Alliance and a longtime activist, in June 2020. “It comes natural, that process. The subtle eyes, the contact, the different ways of approaching somebody was really a lot of fun.” The ritual was interrupted on this particular night as young Chichester saw buses filled with helmeted police officers heading south toward the Democratic National Convention. The Sunday before, August 25, Allen Ginsberg and other gays were peacefully meditating in this park after the 11 PM curfew when the police came swinging batons. Chichester decided to follow these buses out of curiosity. “After seeing what happened in Lincoln Park, I knew

that [police brutality] was going to be an issue.” Chichester would soon stand among the beaten protesters, watching police yank film from cameras and antagonize activists.

“There was another demonstration that was on Michigan Avenue,” Chichester recalls. “Dick Gregory, the comic and activist, invited everyone to his south-side home for a barbecue, so thousands of people started marching down. Slowly as we approached 18th Street, people started leaving the march. And next thing I knew, a conservative kid from the northwest suburbs is face-to-face with a line of jeeps with barbed wire fixed to the front of them. I thought ‘Oh my god, I’m right up front here.’ Next thing I knew I get hit by a tear gas canister. So that really changes your mind a bit.”

Chichester was radicalized. He spent the

rest of the week protesting, which he says made him political. “That was really the first time I’d ever even thought about being an activist. Being a privileged white male, you don’t really think you’re gonna be in protests. I said, ‘This is really a police state,’ much like it is today with *certain people* in the White House. I kind of consider myself, hopefully, knowing the difference between right and wrong. And I was proven to be on the right side of history because it was considered later down a ‘police riot.’”

The following summer in June, Chichester and his boyfriend at the time received a call from a friend in New York City. “You won’t believe what’s happening here tonight,” he said. The daily live updates from the Stonewall riots continued to motivate Chichester. He had been to the Stonewall Inn, a dumpy mafia-owned gay bar where patrons paid a steep cover charge and had to pass through the men’s room to get to the dance floor. “You don’t really feel oppressed until you start opening your eyes,” Chichester says. As word spread through Chicago of an anniversary march celebrating the Greenwich Village uprising, Chichester prepared the flags. Their symbol, two female symbols linked with two male symbols under a proud fist, was printed on his back porch and attached to a pole using the sewing machine of his neighbor—an unaware vice cop. About 200 people gathered in Bughouse Square on Saturday, June 27, 1970, one day before New York City’s first march. The organizers chose this starting location because of its longtime reputation as an area celebrated for free speech. A bonus, somewhat underground reason: the square had also been a popular cruising ground for decades. The marchers raised their flags as they headed for Daley Plaza. “It was really a freeing kind of feeling,” Chichester says. He adds that it wasn’t a frightening experience, but he did see expressions of disbelief and jaws dropping from passersby who weren’t used to such bold protesting.

Out of that energy, Chichester found more resources from radicalized individuals like himself. Vernita Gray created an LGBT hotline by listing her new home phone number, cleverly chosen as FBI-LIST. Richard Pfeiffer picked up organizing the next Pride march (which he would do every year until his death in late 2019). Henry Wiemhoff and others

continued meeting as Chicago Gay Liberation. With the support of these activists and many more, Chichester organized Chicago Gay Alliance and, later, the first gay community center in Chicago. Out of that space on Elm Street, the activists held meetings, started a phone line, shared donated books, held weekly buffets, offered housing, and wrote a newsletter. They picked up the activist tools established by earlier groups like the Daughters of Bilitis and Mattachine Midwest, which warned gay people of police officers (such as the notorious John Manley) posing as cruisers in order to entrap gay men.

Chichester kept himself on the ground, so to speak, in the gay community by tending bar at the Gold Coast and several other businesses owned by future International Mr. Leather founder Chuck Renslow. There he witnessed more police actions, such as his coworker’s arrest for keeping a “disorderly house.”

The next day when they got him out of jail, Chichester says, “he had his chaps off and he was wearing them like a stole, it was so cold! Things like that happened all the time.”

After the first march, organizers decided the next anniversary should be a new form of celebration: a parade. They knew it would be a much larger event in 1971. Chichester went downtown to apply for the permit. “It’s all a learning process,” he says of organizing a large action. “You realize as you get older, if you’re worried about being told no, you’re gonna be told no. If you just go ahead and do what you wanna do, usually there’s not that much pushback.” On the permit, “we named everything we could think of, including a flea circus. Animals, bands, floats. They said yes to everything. The only thing they didn’t say yes to was that first year, they did not stop traffic.” That took about five years, he says. Finally closing down the streets became a necessity for the city when the parade date lined up against a Cubs game. Pride parade organizers finally got word from baseball’s National League on future schedules: “They’re not gonna put a baseball game up against the parade, so fabulous! That was another win.”

Chichester recalls about 1,000 people gathering in 1971 at Belmont Harbor, near another known gay gathering place and cruising ground called the Belmont Rocks. A few floats were lined up and they headed south to Lincoln Park. The parade grew in size every year following, especially after more big wins like marriage equality, Chichester says.



On the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots in 2019, Chichester took a trip to New York City, not to join the parade, but to march with the Reclaim Pride Coalition’s new Queer Liberation March. This separate event was held to recognize a lack of activist involvement in corporate-sponsored, police-lined Pride parades that have become the most common forms of annual celebration. Chichester recalls the street queens and friends he made in places like the early Stonewall when explaining the type of inclusion he saw at Reclaim Pride. “I don’t need a million people to make me feel happy, I just need the right people, people who are outspoken.” He believes that if there were to be more marches, and different options such as Reclaim Pride’s event or the Dyke March, it would ease crowds from corporate Pride and get more people out and able to be vocal. “I love Rich Pfeiffer,” Chichester says of the 48-year Pride parade organizer. “I don’t know how he did it for that length of time and the pressure of trying to keep everybody happy.”

This year will see no Pride parade, only marches. Sunday, June 14, saw the largest protests for transgender rights in recorded history. Thousands of activists filled the streets of Chicago, Brooklyn, and Los Angeles to protest the frequent murders of transgender women of color, two of which happened just days before. The following morning, the Supreme Court announced its ruling against discrimination of LGBTQ employees, a victory the movement has worked for since its beginning. Prior to the ruling, a brief of historians as amici curiae was submitted to the court, citing writing by Bilitis cofounder Del Martin and 1954 Mattachine Society meeting notes using the phrase “sex variant” as evidence that midcentury Americans recognized the meaning of the term “sex” to include the identities of LGBT individuals, thus including them in the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

“I love Pride,” Chichester says. “You see what good it does. All the lost folks out there who are committing suicide or unhappy or losing their family—I’ve been very lucky with my family, they’ve been very supportive over the years, but I’m on the small end of that percentage.” He begins to reminisce about the march against Anita Bryant, the Orange Balls at the Aragon, the LGBT Hands Across America. “There’s always something new to do.” 

 @DevlynCamp

POETRY CORNER

It took me a while to stop trusting the world’s opinion.

By Jackson C. Santy

Someone once taught me that life is measured by the moments that leave us breathless.

This cliché is all I can seem to clench at while a man’s sleeves
noxious and meandering, shapeshift into serpents sewn across each armful
of wrinkled and beer-soaked fabric, constricting tighter and tighter.

I name him—Vasco Da Gama.

I name him and his five predatory predecessors after colonial explorers.

Who expand their reaches to places they are not welcome, to desecrating what my mother taught me was sacred land.

Who day after day continue to be celebrated due to the Destiny Manifested between the lines of “Boys will be boys.”

Someone once told me “ableism doesn’t exist;”
that I was “lucky” for the special treatment I am afforded as a Little Person.

Try telling that to Blake Johnston;
snatched mid-cigarette & spiked to the ground by a stranger, left paralyzed
it was his birthday.

To Martin Henderson;
set on fire by a drunken party goer
his boss laughed,
thought it was a joke.

To Adam Smith;
slammed head first on a street corner
left for dead by blunt force trauma.

Over and over again, I hear stories of internalized torment
metastasized into obligatory introversion after too many
Sunday strolls crash into unwanted spectacle.

People say I have to pick my battles;
but every day is my battle.

Every day I am fighting for air;
so if to resist is to survive
then every breath is a
revolution.

If my existence is not in line with the status quo,
then it is a defiance of the status quo.

If my existence is a defiance of the status quo,
then every morning that I wake up
my disfigurement takes the form of a middle finger.

I cannot help but recall that the world treats me as if something is wrong with me;
it took me a while to stop trusting the world’s opinion.

Jackson is a burgeoning poet and essayist with a professional background in child behavioral care. As both a writer and youth advocate, Jackson’s work hopes to echo and uplift our unique capacities for resilience amongst even the utmost humiliations.

A biweekly series curated by the Chicago Reader and sponsored by the Poetry Foundation. Poem by Nikki Patin, who holds an MFA in creative non-fiction from the University of Southern Maine, is a recipient of a 3Arts Make A Wave award in music, and was recently named one of “30 Writers to Watch” by the Guild Literary Complex. Patin is the community engagement director for the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation and the founder and executive producer of Surviving the Mic, a monthly live podcast and writing workshop series based on the south side of Chicago, where she lives with her six-year-old son, Tobias.

Poetry Foundation | 61 West Superior Street | poetryfoundation.org/events





Cliff Raven outside Sunset Strip Tattoo shortly after buying it from Lyle Tuttle—there are more Raven flash, memorabilia, and photos like this at Great Lakes Tattoo.

© COURTESY NICK COLELLA / GREAT LAKES TATTOO

HISTORY

Chicago's gay granddaddy of tattooing

How Cliff Raven changed the city's ink culture forever

By MICCO CAPORALE

“What about Stonewall?” the interviewer asks. “What about it?” Cliff Raven says.

“Did that have any effect on you when it happened in 1969?” Reading the transcript, you can almost hear Raven taking a drag on a cigarette as he smirks at the question.

“When I really got into tattooing,” he says, “when I became, you might say, successful at it—it was very absorbing of my time. So I wasn’t aware of all the ins and outs and intrigues [of gay politics].”

The conversation is part of an oral history collected for the Leather Archives & Museum by acclaimed leather writer and educator Jack Rinella. It’s between him and one of the most influential tattooers in American history whose success is owed, in large part, to in-

volvement with gay Chicago. If Chuck Renslow was the heart of Chicago’s leather community, Raven was the valve. He shuttled the community’s ideas and influence into a career that elevated the craft and safety of tattooing; but soft-spoken and modest, a man of the “don’t ask, don’t tell” generation, Raven minimized this. By his own account, he was just a very busy tattooer.

Before becoming Cliff Raven, who the *Star Tribune* once called the “Elvis of Tattooing,” he was Cliff Ingram, a Catholic kid born in 1932 by a steel mill in East Chicago. Early on, he had a mind for details. Some of his favorite childhood memories were leaving Lincoln Park Zoo to walk around with his mother, always a balloon in hand, savoring the features of gilded lamp posts and Victorian two-flats. “Gorgeous,” he’d later write in his diary.

His mother was warm and would invite neighborhood kids over even before Raven was old enough to play, while his father was severe and distant in a way typical of men of that generation. Once, he killed their family dog, Shep, for “showing fear.” That meant Shep was a coward, his father explained, and a coward can’t protect his family. When Raven ran from his first schoolyard fight, his father was quick to label him a coward, too. This would haunt him until the end of his days. Is someone unworthy of love if they’re a coward? Should you just get rid of them?

Perhaps this is some of what drove Raven away from home. There’s not much known about his teens and 20s except that he was wild and wanting. By 15, he had given himself a stick-and-poke of a winged wheel, and at 16, he forged his draft card to get into bathhouses. He started college, then dropped out and fled to New York. But he was strongly connected to his mother, brother, and extended family. In 1957, his mom beckoned him back to the midwest to finish art school at Indiana University, and upon graduation, he settled into a Chicago life in advertising. Over drinks one night, someone mentioned there were bars in New York with “strange” people. Had he heard of these? Men walked around completely decked in leather.

“I perked up,” he explains to Rinella. By this

point, Raven was regularly cruising Bughouse Square looking to be picked up by men on motorcycles because he liked tough guys and tough things. “I wasn’t aware of [such bars] when I lived there. I’m not sure if they really were there. I basically said, ‘Oh gee, tell me where they are, so I won’t make the mistake of walking into one!’” Then he planned a New York getaway to find them.

Shortly afterward, he met Renslow and his partner Dom Orejudos, perhaps better known under his art monicker “Etienne” as a pioneer of the buxom gay imagery commonly attributed to Tom of Finland. It was 1959. Renslow and Orejudos were already running Kris Studios, a popular beefcake photography spot, and a gym that kept them amply supplied with sculpted models. Raven brought Renslow some of his erotic drawings, hoping Kris might have a use for them. Instead, he got invited to an orgy. Quickly, something blossomed between Renslow and Raven, and Renslow asked Orejudos if he could bring Raven into their home as a second lover. Not a thurple, he explained, but part of their family. Orejudos gladly accommodated, and “The Family” was born.

Renslow was into BDSM, and Raven became one of his submissives. As Renslow explained to Tracy Baim and Owen Keehnen in *The Leatherman*: “Our personalities worked well together. He was very passive; that was important. My saying is ‘Boys and dogs should be obedient.’”

Emboldened by his immersion in an erotically charged tough-guy world, Raven felt desperate for a tattoo. Word on the street was this guy Phil Sparrow, then considered Chicago’s most accomplished tattooer, would trade blow jobs for tattoos, so Raven hoped he might trade erotic drawings for ink, too. Sparrow, better known as Samuel Steward, subject of *The Secret Historian*, gave him a two-inch butterfly on his forearm, and it changed more than his physique.

Sparrow was already friendly with Renslow, and with Cliff’s added interest, each man saw something new in him: for Raven, a career to aspire towards; for Renslow, a potential goldmine. At the time, tattooing was a dangerous line of work, but existing as part of an underworld made it feel like a safe job for a man who wanted to be more openly gay. Plus, for Sparrow, also a BDSM enthusiast, tattooing felt sexual: an exchange of fluids and strong physical sensation, one person desiring pain and handing control to another.



This may be some of what interested Renslow, who learned the basics from Sparrow but quickly lost interest. However, Raven saw tattoos' artistic potential. Renslow taught what he knew to Raven, and his talents quickly eclipsed his daddy's. Now working as a freelance commercial artist, Raven took a weekend gig tattooing. It was at a hybrid penny arcade/burger joint two hours south, by Chanute Air Force Base.

Contrary to popular lore, Raven did not assume his surname as a nod to Sparrow or other tattooers with bird monikers. Tattooing was not considered respectable work, and many used pseudonyms to separate their personal and professional lives, especially to spare families any shame or embarrassment their work might cause. Through a queer lens, renaming can be viewed as an act of self determination—a separation from a life on other's terms vs. a life on one's own. Raven has never remarked on this. What he has said is, growing up, his father explained “Ingram” meant “Raven” in Old English. If being a tattooer was his most authentic self, he still held his birth family close.

Renslow was an enterprising business person, but everyone in the Family—whose lineage grew and shifted over the years—became part of Renslow Family Enterprises. This helped members share resources, including names for paperwork since homophobic arrests barred some, including Renslow, from legally assuming certain responsibilities. In turn, this grew everyone's influence and economic stability, including Raven's.

Raven had the idea to start a leather meet-up, and when the group got kicked out of bar after bar, Renslow decided to buy the bar the Gold Coast so they'd have a permanent community site. Ironically, Raven was against this because a financial stake might shift the priorities of the space, but he was outvoted. (Until his death, Renslow insisted Gold Coast was never intentionally or accidentally a money-maker—always just a gift to his community.) Raven was also a copartner in a short-lived bathhouse and the uncredited art director of Renslow's bodybuilding magazines *Triumph* and *Mars*.

In 1963, amid hepatitis outbreaks, concerns about unsanitary conditions, and nuisances purportedly attracted by tattooing, Illinois raised the tattooing age from 18 to 21. Barely legal military recruits were tattooers' bread and butter, so Chicago artists either aban-

doned the trade or moved. According to a 1974 edition of *Chicago Guide*, the city went from around 20 working artists spread across six shops along State Street to none—except Raven. He loved tattooing too much, and he had a strong community interested in permanent ink. Plus, he'd be the only guy in town.

Under Renslow Family Enterprises, he set up his first solo shop, the Old Town Tattoo Salon, in a storefront of their apartment building on Larrabee Street. When they lost the building to gentrification, they relocated to a rundown spot on Belmont and opened what eventually became Chicago Tattoo Company, which is still in business today. This is when Raven started to feel removed from, as he would say, the “ins and outs and intrigues” of a larger gay scene, but his community was always his life force.

Partially from Sparrow's encouragement, Raven took to Japanese-influenced tattooing. Nick Colella, owner of Great Lakes Tattoo and unofficial historian of all things Chicago tattoo, believes this was because Japanese tattooing lent itself to intricate, custom, large-scale work. In the 1970s, Raven, Ed Hardy (apprenticed by Sparrow), and Don Nolan were known as “the big three” because they poured over Japanese art and tattooing and fused it with old school Americana to change people's ideas of what the artform could be. For years, they took all the top prizes at tattoo conventions because of it.

But whereas Hardy was very strict about traditional Japanese imagery and approach, even spending extensive time studying in Japan, and Nolan skewed more Americana, combining the Japanese composite method with a more western visual lexicon, Raven found inspiration to push tattoos' beauty. Eventually, he abandoned stencils in favor of drawing directly on people's bodies. His entire working life he traded tips and correspondences with Japan's most significant tattooers to bring depth and complexity to his work.

“His ability to blend and pack so much color in the skin with the tools they had in the 70s was insane,” Colella says.

In Colella's private archive, there are photos that register Raven's pieces as a tribute to the male form: in one, a large Bengal tiger moves along the curve of a man's thigh to emphasize his buttocks, its tail snaking down the hip, then under and around onto the penis; in another, a garland of flowers are rendered to frame the genitals while accentuating the movement of the man's breath. It's work that

demonstrates skills honed from deep trust and sensitivity to men's bodies.

That kind of mindfulness is what put health on the forefront of Raven's mind. Until the late 60s, tattooers made their own inks and needles. These were highly protected trade secrets that distinguished some artists over others but also made tattooing a little unpredictable and even dangerous. Allergic reactions and infections from ink were common, as was reusing needles and inks because of the time and labor required to make new ones. With the help of then co-owners Buddy McFall and Dale Grande, Raven started Chicago Tattoo Supply, one of the first companies to mass-produce inks and needles. While tattooers had mixed feelings on wider equipment distribution, the growing availability of supplies forced them to confront ways they had been failing clients.

This is also a reason Raven was an early adopter of tattooing with gloves. In 1976, he bought Sunset Strip Tattoos from legendary tattooer Lyle Tuttle and relocated to Los Angeles—a move he'd been dreaming of since childhood, when an aunt on the west coast would send Christmas cards with palm trees. As he explained in his journal, the money and community in Chicago were extremely difficult to give up, but he longed for sunny winters and beaches. Once a Californian, he worked closely with a doctor who provided medical insight to running the cleanest, safest shop possible, which included things like covering surfaces with single-use protective barriers.

When HIV emerged, studios began refusing homosexual customers, and many gay tattooers left the field. In a letter to Raven, one artist explains feeling relief that police raids closed him down. “I do not fancy working continually with people's BLOOD on my hands in these plague days of anguish and horrible viruses which they . . . don't know shit about,” he says. His community's palpable anxiety bolstered Raven's commitment to providing a medical-grade sterile environment, and it secured him as a beacon to gay men who wanted ink.

Pat Fish, the last tattooer trained by Raven, recalls him saying three things are necessary to be a good tattoo artist: art, craft, and morals. Part of having morals meant prioritizing clients' health.

“He made me buy an autoclave before he let me buy a tattoo machine,” she laughs. This was in 1985. According to her, gloves weren't even industry standard until a doctor led a workshop on it at a tattoo convention in

1986—though Greg James, another tattooer who worked with Raven, says they were slowly becoming common in the early 80s. Raven began wearing them in the late 70s, and he was using an autoclave, the machine hospitals use to sterilize reusable equipment, as early as 1970.

At the time he bought Sunset Strip Tattoos, Tuttle laughed and said Raven would be lucky to get by on tattooing alone. Briefly, the space also functioned as a hair salon for his life partner, Pierre Mitchell, who dabbled in tattooing as Bob Raven, Raven's “brother.” But he grew the shop to support multiple artists, eventually selling it to protege Robert Benedetti in 1985 and retiring to run a used bookstore and private studio with Mitchell in the sleepy city of Twentynine Palms. Thanks to guidance from Raven, networking, and being in the “right place, right time,” Benedetti and James became the premiere tattooers of the Sunset Strip, marking the likes of Ozzy Osbourne, Mötley Crüe, and Guns N' Roses. Axl Rose can even be seen wearing the shop's shirt in the video for “Sweet Child of Mine.”

Being gay and having a legacy so robust it's even visible in music videos has led some to celebrate Raven as an openly queer trailblazer. But this is not exactly accurate. Much of his sexuality is documented because of his proximity to Renslow—they even filmed a BDSM scene together for the Kinsey Institute!—but after leaving the Family, there is scant public information about that part of Raven's life. By all accounts, those who were meant to know he was gay at the time knew. But everyone else didn't.

This was as much for Raven's personal and professional safety as it was a desire for privacy. As Ed Hardy told the Tattoo Archive, Raven was “always a private man.” So much so, many didn't even know he was deeply spiritual. He abandoned Catholicism in junior high but continued praying and contemplating God till the end of his life. He even kept extensive religious correspondences with his devout Catholic cousin. James describes him as someone who could connect to a high school dropout mechanic as much as an Ivy League-educated lawyer, but Raven was careful how much of himself he revealed and to whom.

In 2001, Raven died of hepatitis C with Mitchell, his lover of 27 years, by his side. In the annals of tattoo history, though, he is immortal. **A**

 @miccoslays



Gabriel Chalfin-Piney is a queer, polyamorous, self-taught tattoo artist. © COURTESY THE ARTIST

pride

COMMUNITY

#QTTRs make their mark

These four queer artists are building their own community in the tattoo world.

By TARYN ALLEN

The tattoo industry, as we typically think of it, seems like no place for queer people. Even with early pioneers like Cliff Raven and Phil Sparrow, it's remained an overwhelmingly heteronormative, patriarchal, and white field, a fact that was only confirmed by my search to find Chicago queer tattoo artists, especially folks of color, which yielded many a "nobody like that works at our shop, sorry!" But pockets of queer tattooers exist and seem to be growing, forming their own communities and reimagining industry standards, especially to cater to clients beyond those who are typically represented. Queer tattoo artists are around; you just have to know where to look.

Diana Regalado

Diana Regalado used to get in trouble for drawing naked ladies on her arms during school. She'd get sent to the dean's office for the fine line black and gray artwork that preceded her tattooing, a style of drawing that she didn't even know was Chicana at the time.

It remains her style today, but the Latinx gay/lesbian/queer artist is drawing at Archer Avenue Tattoo instead of in class. Regalado started in the tattoo industry after nearly a decade at a graphic design firm. Between her art experience and her time under the needle (she is heavily covered with tattoos herself), she quickly secured an apprenticeship, something for which she feels incredibly grateful (artists usually need formal apprenticeships, which require working many hours for free, or even at a price).

Archer Avenue Tattoo is located on the south side in Brighton Park, and the clients are mostly people of color. According to Regalado, "Like in any workplace, you just have to find a shop or space that best fits you and makes you comfortable, one with like-minded people. There are so many different kinds of shops out there now that you'll always find the right place where you'll fit in. I've been fortunate enough to work with very down-to-earth guys, and Archer has always had a neighborhood and family vibe—more like annoying brothers that constantly mess with me." It's no wonder that she's been

tattooing there for ten years.

Regalado's tattoos are appointment only right now due to COVID-19, but "the books are always open." Her Instagram is @dianaregalado; e-mail regaladotattoo11@gmail.com for appointments.

buddy.

April O'Neil from *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* was buddy's first crush, and one of the first indications of queerness that they remember. They were born and raised in the deep south, though, so it wasn't until dropping out of high school and moving to Chicago that buddy. felt more at ease being themselves. Now, as a professional tattoo artist, buddy. is changing the industry with their activism, inclusivity, and killer illustrative blackwork tattoos.

buddy. has tattooed a huge range of people, seeing clients with severe scarring, clients in wheelchairs, clients with MS, and more. "I cannot say this loud enough: everybody is welcome in my chair—unless you're racist or an asshole, then be gone. We wouldn't have a good time anyhow."

Outside of their regular appointments, however, is where buddy. truly shines. In order to combat the rampant cases of sexual assault on clients and artists in the tattoo industry, buddy. started a Facebook group called "off with their hands." It serves as a platform for people around the world to call out offenders—particularly repeat offenders who get away with assault by relocating or abusing their industry clout.

On a local level, buddy. is involved with a collective of femme-identifying, nonbinary queer tattooers called "broad squad." They raise money for various charities and folks in need via art shows, flash events, and more. COVID-19 interrupted plans for multiple events, including one to help at-risk LGBTQ+ youth and women's shelters, and one for tattooing over mastectomy scars.

buddy. currently tattoos at Speakeasy Custom Tattoo in Wicker Park. Take a look at their portfolio @snak3oil on Instagram, and



e-mail buddytattoos@gmail.com to set up a consultation.

Becca Iturralde

To some surprise, Becca Iturralde actually credits their quick success in the tattoo industry to their intersectional identities. They're a Pilsen native who identifies as a nonbinary queer person of Mexican American ethnicity, which is uncommon in the Chicago handpoke tattoo scene.

Being a tattoo artist was always a dream for Iturralde, but the gatekeeping of the industry was made to exclude people like them. However, after they discovered handpoke tattoos on Instagram, Iturralde fell in love and started doing whatever they could to learn and practice by themselves and in their community. It's only been a year and a half, but it's now their full-time job.

"How I approach tattooing is definitely shaped by my experience living as a QTPOC," they say. "My style is illustrative and soft, and my goal is to cause the least amount of trauma to the skin. Black and Brown folks often experience racism in tattooing whether it's intentional or not, since many tattooers are not well trained when it comes to tattooing darker skin tones. Many artists believe they must tattoo deeper or harder to make the ink stick better on dark skin (this just scars people) or artists will deny potential clients color tattoos based on the color of their skin (this is just ignorant). Because of this, many Black and Brown people are wary of the mainstream tattoo industry, and they want to try handpoke because of how gentle and intentional the craft is when done right . . . Traditionally, tattooing is a sacred practice. It was invented by BIPOC, and I find it incredibly important to honor that."

Iturralde only allows fellow queer and/or Brown artists to tattoo them, avoiding the "stereotypical tatt bro" and continuing to support and grow the queer and POC tattoo community.

Iturralde works out of a private studio, and their books remain closed due to COVID-19, which disproportionately affects Black and Brown communities. They will announce re-opening on their Instagram [@softbarrio](#) and website [softbarrio.com](#).

Gabriel Chalfin-Piney

A printmaker by trade, Gabriel Chalfin-Piney is a queer, polyamorous, self-taught tattoo artist with a style all their own.

About three years ago, Chalfin-Piney bought

a tattoo machine off a friend, began seeking advice about safety and sterilization, and started offering free tattoos to folks in upstate New York, where they lived. Since then, they have relocated to Chicago and continued learning with each new tattoo. In terms of style, activists, "scratchers" (self-taught artists), and printmakers have been their inspiration all along the way, particularly contemporary artists like Inez Nathaniel Walker, Francesco Clemente, Gwendolyn Knight, Martin Puryear, and Philip Guston.

Chalfin-Piney cites Instagram as playing a formative role in their work as a tattoo artist. They looked to [@ritasalt](#) and [@framacho](#), artists who had tattooed them in the past, for guidance in getting started. [@inkthediapora](#), a platform that highlights BIPOC folks and provides resources and workshops, has helped them learn more about color-matching and communicating with clients when tattooing non-white skin. Hashtags like [#qttr](#) (queer tattooer) and [#queerchicago](#) provide an immediate network for clients and artists to find each other.

They emphasize the influence of [@tamarasantibanez](#), who's been very vocal about dismantling white supremacy and anti-Blackness in the scene, as well as providing guidance for informed consent and trauma-aware tattooing—guidelines for which can be found through [@disciplinepress](#).

"I always ask someone coming in for a tattoo if they are comfortable with me touching a part of their body that I am planning to tattoo during the session and letting them know that if they need a break at any time, we can stop," Chalfin-Piney says. "I do this regardless of location of the tattoo; having a stranger touch your body is intimate and requires repeated verbal consent and check-ins. There is some idea in the tattooing industry that you have to wait to take breaks or 'we just need to finish this line' and I disagree with that concept. At least for me, we can stop whenever we need to. There's no rush."

Chalfin-Piney says, "I really think there is space for queer folks in the industry. I think realizing that you can ask for help is the biggest step; I had to be patient when I started tattooing, taking time to learn all of the safety procedures and ways of tattooing, and I'm still learning."

Chalfin-Piney is not currently tattooing due to COVID-19, but they are on Instagram [@garlic.bagel](#) and [@daddyasthma](#). 

 [@itstarynallen](#)



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An IRL Peach party from the before times

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COMMUNITY

Queer self-care straight from the Vine

Lifestyle and event brand Peach launches a digital headspace.

By S. NICOLE LANE

In the before times, Saturdays were filled with cocktails, sequins, queer DJs, and performances. My Saturdays look a lot different nowadays and my Sundays are a little less hungover. Before, I would be plotting, planning, and scheduling days to dance and surround myself with other dancing bodies. Since 2017, the lifestyle and event brand Peach has celebrated LGBTQ women and nonbinary folks with music, drinks, food, and dancing. The parties Peach threw at Market Days and Bad Hunter created a safe space for femme folks to join a community of anywhere from 70 to 400 people. And Peach is so much more than just an outing on a Saturday night. Dancing is self-care. Getting pampered and primped is self-care. Connecting with queer communities is self-care. With events and parties obviously being canceled and postponed, party projects like Peach have been hit hard during the pandemic. During the quarantine period, Peach promoters found that they needed to seek an alternative, digital component for their project. As a response, the Vine was born.

Bre Auberry, the president of Black Thread Agency, which produces Peach, says, “When quarantine went into effect and we saw that events wouldn’t be happening for the foresee-

able future, we had team meetings to discuss what Peach should focus on and how we could contribute support to the community during this time. We created the Vine to give a platform to members of the Chicago queer community and create helpful, entertaining videos for our Peaches.” The digital content series, which lives on Instagram @peachpresents, features LGBTQ folks like DJs, health-care professionals, and more discussing sex, dating, wellness, music, art, and more. Where folks went to Peach parties to connect with their queer community, the Vine has stepped up as wellness support for queer people while in isolation.

Black Thread Agency is a multicultural marketing and events firm. Auberry began BTA as a way to create projects that empower her community and colleagues. “We build with intention and use our skills to uplift movements, people, and places that mean the most to us,” she says. To continue this momentum, Auberry’s creation of the Vine helps address certain concerns and anxieties occurring within our society during these precarious times.

A *USA Today* article from early May looked at how coronavirus is affecting LGBTQ folks, especially those of color, and how the community is—and has been—experiencing discrimination

and vulnerability in the health-care system. Since many LGBTQ people live in metropolitan areas with the highest numbers of coronavirus cases, they have also been impacted by job loss and unemployment, as well as disparities in physical health and mental health. With 17 percent of LGBTQ adults not having access to health insurance coverage (compared to 12 percent of non-LGBTQ citizens), it can be a terrifying and mentally distressing time. The inequalities around BIPOC and the LGBTQ community are reflected in their access to health care.

Recently, the Vine published a video with Casey Tanner, who runs Queer Sex Therapy, a virtual brand that promotes anti-oppressive, pleasure-positive, queer content on Instagram, and partners with various sexual health brands that are looking at better ways to reach queer communities. Her “Sex Pros You Gotta Know” highlights BIPOC sex educators, therapists, and artists. Tanner has also been an avid Peach attendee since the collective’s early days.

Tanner’s episode for the Vine was filmed and posted prior to recent protests, but she addresses queer resilience and ways of coping in a healthy way with the stressors and anxiety of COVID. When I ask her how folks can armor themselves amidst the stress of the protests, she explains that she has to look at everyone’s different identity. “White people in the LGBTQ+ community are going to have entirely different experiences than LGBTQ+ Black folks, and Black folks will have different experiences than other people of color. As a white person, I can’t speak to ways in which people of color should cope, however, I can say that other white folks should be armoring themselves as protectors, advocates, and accomplices in this movement. We need to prepare ourselves to have hard conversations with family about white supremacy. We need to practice our distress tolerance skills that help us really self-evaluate our growth edges.”

In her Vine video, Tanner mentions “hypervigilance” as a response during times of stress. “Hypervigilance can look like being extra aware of your surroundings, feeling like you’re constantly on alert, and/or being easily startled,” she says. Our vigilance and alertness can cross the boundary into hypervigilance as we continuously scroll through news feeds, bombard our brains with constant information, and get worked up about negative outcomes. “For example, Black folks have every reason to be hypervigilant about possible experiences

of racism, violence, and oppression given that these are very real threats. Thus, coping does not always look like decreasing alertness; rather, it may look like seeking out or creating spaces in which you feel certain you are actually safe. This is why it’s so important for queer folks to have access to queer-only spaces, and for BIPOC to have BIPOC-only spaces—virtual, or otherwise.”

Right now, folks are taking to the streets and still battling rising numbers of COVID. Patricia Newton, chief executive and medical director of the Black Psychiatrists of America, told the *Washington Post* that the quarantine was the “kindling, and the police brutality lit the fire.” Anger and isolation have conflated and resulted in a national response. Systemic racism has contributed to decades of trauma and stress, closely linked to PTSD. Psychologists call this “racial trauma,” where years of effects can severely damage the mental and physical health of Black folks. PTSD may be caused by a one-time event, whereas racial trauma is ongoing as Black people continue to be murdered and endure discrimination. For the Black LGBTQ community, trauma takes many roots. With the recent deaths of Riah Milton and Dominique “Rem’mie” Fells plus the Trump administration’s reversal on protections for trans people’s health care, communities are overwhelmed with heartbreak and frustration. As a result, self-care and mental health take a back seat. Tanner’s video addresses concerns surrounding our mental stabilities during the current health climate and how to overcome these obstacles. The Vine shows us that Peach was never just about partying—it’s so much more than that.

“From the start, the goal of Peach has been to create incredible queer experiences and gatherings that we ourselves would want to attend and that also give back,” says Auberry. “Every event and almost every project we do has a giving element with donations, support, resources, etc.” They recently partnered with Raygun to create a “Pride Is a Protest” shirt, and a portion of the proceeds will go to Brave Space Alliance, the only Black-led, trans-led LGBTQ center in Chicago, which is doing great work with jail support, CPS meal distribution, and feeding south- and west-side Chicagoans.

Auberry hopes that viewers will get a “nice little ten-minute mental break while they watch an episode” and feel connected to “others in the community, gaining useful tips for adapting to everything happening now.”

🐦 @snicolelane

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Tiffany Hudson
 ASHTON TV

BUSINESS

The new face of DEI work

Tiffany Hudson and her partners are bringing diversity, equity, and inclusion to Chicago businesses their way.

By BRIANNA WELLEN

Tiffany Hudson is in the DEI business—and right now, business is booming. For the past three and a half years she’s been helping companies improve their diversity, equity, and inclusion practices, work that’s quickly gained momentum in recent weeks as a result of national attention being drawn even more to how systemic racism affects every industry. Hudson and her business partners work with all industries—they call themselves “industry agnostic”—and the companies range in size from two people to 40,000 employees. The reasoning behind that is simple: everyone can benefit from improving diversity, equity, and inclusion. I talked with Hudson about the Nova Collective’s approach to their work, her personal experiences she brings to the job, and the work we all still need to do.

Our conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

Brianna Wellen: What made you first decide to form the Nova Collective?

Tiffany Hudson: The four founders decided we wanted to work exclusively on diversity, equity, and inclusion work, and we wanted

to do it a little differently than we saw a lot of companies doing it. That’s really why we started the business, we’re very passionate about it. We think that in the United States, and even in the world, diversity, equity, and inclusion work—there have been some great people out there doing some great work for quite some time now, I think most people would be surprised to know how long this work has been done, and we thought, “Let’s be another one of those companies that’s making some change, and making impactful change, not just coming in and doing one workshop and leaving.” Really it was about wanting to see a difference in the corporate space and disrupt some things corporately, that’s what we’ve been trying to do.

What are some of those things you do differently at Nova Collective?

We have a very strong commitment in making sure all of our teams are staffed with a majority women and majority people of color. We’re always prioritizing underrepresented groups, and honestly when we’re talking about diversity, equity, inclusion work, we’re always trying to make sure that the nondominant narrative

is being pushed to the top because the dominant narrative has been talked about for so long, and so for us the nondominant narrative is something that we really focus on when we’re having conversations with organizations. We ground our work in social identity. A lot of companies and organizations talk about unconscious bias, or talk about allyship, or talk about these different DEI topics, but what we say is, “Yes, we can certainly talk about those topics with you, but instead of diving into those topics, let’s lay some foundational work here and talk about social identity, because really that’s why all of those things are existing.” And I’ll tell you, some companies are totally on board with it, and some companies hate it, but it’s something that we will not shy away from.

Why do you think there is that pushback from some people to approach it in that way?

What we’ve been told [is], “Well you’re putting people into boxes” or “You’re quote-unquote calling people out,” and we’re actually not doing that at all. A lot of these big corporations have what we call employee resource groups, and so businesses with employee resource groups are often defined or explained by social identity. Like, if we have a resource group for Black individuals at the organization or a resource group for folks who identify on the LGBTQ+ spectrum. We’re already talking about social identity, we’re just not calling it that, so the groups are already there. So I think that this is more of an approach that gets people a little uncomfortable, and I think that’s what folks have to start doing, is getting comfortable with being uncomfortable when talking about diversity, equity, and inclusion.

How has your experience growing up and working in the world informed how you approach this topic for other people?

My dad has worked in diversity, equity, and inclusion at a bank here in Chicago for quite some time, right up until his passing. I think I’ve always been around the work and I’ve subconsciously probably been taking in so much growing up, and I think growing up in a diverse suburb right out of Chicago, I saw a lot. I think being a Black gay woman, I’ve had some positive experiences and I’ve

had some negative experiences, so I’m able to relate to a lot of different people. For me, my personal experiences have certainly put me in a position where I have seen a lot, I’ve experienced a lot, and I’ve learned when and how to react.

It seems like a very difficult job to separate from your personal life because it has to be personal.

Especially with everything right now with the movement, the Black Lives Matter movement has always been incredible to me, and I think now seeing where the Black Lives Matter movement has gone, there’s certainly, certainly some personal feelings around all of it, and then there is a professional side. I think I’m still figuring it out. Our business is the busiest it’s ever been since we started. I prioritize my care, I’m never ashamed to say I’m upset. And my business partners and employees, we also take care of each other. My business partners are real good at knowing if we’re in a conversation and I’m checking out, to know we have to step back, especially at a time like this.

How are you approaching all the business you’re getting right now and making sure people continue to do the work beyond this specific moment?

I’ll be very honest with people. A lot of the people I’ve spoken to—and now mind you, we are in the process of hiring folks and we are dividing and covering it as a business—but the folks that I’ve spoken to, no one is really in it for the one and done, and I’m actually very, very happy to hear that. It’s very interesting to me that some people are really just realizing that systemic racism is a thing, but also I’m glad that they’re realizing it. It’s better now than never. I think that a lot of companies and organizations are understanding that this is not something that changed overnight, because this has been hundreds and hundreds of years that it has been building. And so now how do we break it down. Right now we’re offering companies something called processing sessions, and the one thing that we’re telling them is, “Hey, here’s the deal, if you have this, we want you to understand that this is going to unearth a lot of things that are happening at your organization, and what you have to understand is this is not the end, this is just the beginning.”

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PRIDE

A parade of online talent for Pride

Queer performers bust binaries and bigotry.

By CATEY SULLIVAN

As Pride Month unfurls amid plague and long-overdue global upheaval, you have to ask yourself one question: What would Marsha P. Johnson do?

In the Beginning (June 28, 1969 to be exact), Johnson allegedly lobbed a brick (some say a stiletto) at the cops who had decided, yet again, to fuck with the LGBT (it would be decades before the acronym became truly inclusive) kings and queens of the Stonewall Inn. Johnson flung the projectile heard round the

world, ushering in a binary-busting revolution that marches on some 51 years later.

To paraphrase the great Tony Kushner, her great work continues. For Pride 2020, much of it continues online as artists navigate a world where contagion has redefined what it means to create community.

Below, a roundup of artists celebrating Pride and—like the late, great Marsha “Pay It No Mind” Johnson—demanding the world take notice.

The Vixen JOSHUAN APONTE

Get your dollars out

When south-side-born-and-raised drag queen the Vixen addressed Chicago’s Drag March for Change in Boystown Sunday, June 14, the *RuPaul’s Drag Race* alum evoked Johnson’s righteous rage.

“Growing up gay and Black on the south side, you had to worry about dying because of how you looked and also because of how you felt,” recalled the Vixen. The overwhelmingly white gay enclave in Boystown didn’t offer much of a respite, she added. “When I finally went to my first Pride on the north side, it was like, ‘Oh. I’m not welcome here either.’”

With her *Black Girl Magic* and *Queer Table*, the Vixen is forging her own brand of welcoming space. *BGM* is an online variety show for Black drag queens; *Queer Table* is a talk show where cohosts Vixen and Dida Ritz and a crew of LGBTQIA+ youth discuss everything from body dysmorphia to transphobia. “When I started drag in 2013, there was this respectability factor. If you were a drag queen, you were there to entertain, and that was it. Well, I could only keep my mouth shut for so long,” she said. “Black trans women have always been at the forefront of every movement,” she informs audiences at the top of *BGM*. “It’s time for us to show them some love. So get your dollars out,” she said.

You don’t get to look away

Aimy Tien radiates a similar boldness with *The Constitution of Queerdom*, penned and performed by About Face Theatre’s youth ensemble.

“So many people think Pride is just rainbows and glitter and naked people. I’m like no, Pride started as a riot. We celebrate, but we have to keep fighting,” Tien said. “The work is not done, not when the life expectancy of a Black trans woman is around 35. All lives can’t matter until Black Lives Matter. All Black Lives can’t matter until Black trans and queer lives matter.”

The Constitution of Queerdom is part of About Face Youth Theatre’s “Power in Pride at Home” series, which has the young ensemble creating new mini-plays weekly, all geared toward amplifying queer voices.

“The more stories we can tell, the better,” said Tien. “Queer stories matter. Queer people matter. You don’t get to look away. We are

right here. We are not going anywhere.”

The elephant in the room

Humboldt Park-based UrbanTheater is also acting up online and off. UT’s weekly series *iQue Pasa!* launches with comedy from Roscoe Village native Gwen La Roka, who finds the funny at the intersection of social justice and social distancing.

“Usually, I’m like, ‘Oh, I’ll talk smack about anything,’” La Roka said. “But now? There’s a lot of triggers for a lot of people around the devastation of COVID. You have to tread lightly, but you can’t go up on stage and ignore that very obvious elephant in the room.” COVID isn’t the only elephant.

“I saw a post recently that asked why some people are acting like Black people just came out, like, the extent of racism (BIPOC) people deal with is something that’s news that we’re all just realizing. But that elephant has been here for 400 years.”

La Roka describes her *iQue Pasa!* set as “comedy up front, hang around, have a drink and pick my brain” after the stand-up set.

“I tell stories about growing up queer with Mexican and Guatemalan parents, sometimes with Spanglish. I’ve had little old ladies say to me, ‘I didn’t understand every word you said, but I know exactly what you were talking about. My Italian mother was just like your mom.’”

Pushed, challenged, broken

Actor Christine Chang is making their professional debut in Chicago online. They play Ferdinand in Shakespeare All-Stars online staging of *The Tempest*. Ferdinand’s story is almost eerily timely: a shipwreck (or a space wreck in All-Stars’s revisionist take) leaves Ferdinand cruelly isolated and struggling to survive in a strange, scary new world. Zoom rehearsals were a challenge, but Chang decided to approach Ferdinand’s love scenes as “a Skype call with someone I have a long-distance relationship with, or an extreme crush on.”

“This was my first Chicago show, and it was supposed to be on a regular stage. So I’ve mourned the loss of that,” they added. “But then I got excited to see how we were going to transition. I mean, yes there are limitations, but limitations are meant to be pushed, challenged, broken.”

Pretending to be a man

Like Chang, Kory Wall is making their Chica-



pride

go acting debut electronically. The nonbinary 25-year-old plays Man in playwright (and *Reader* contributor) Jack Helbig's *Thinking of Her...*, slated to run June 25 through July 12 via cutlassartists.com.

The elliptical romance unspools as a love triangle where traditional gender roles are shrugged off as Man/Waiter, Someone/Waiter, Woman and Woman (Later) navigate romance. Wall is in Springfield, Illinois, with other cast members rehearsing from Oregon and Nebraska. Director Mark Hardiman oversees the project from his Kansas home. "The virtual rehearsing is new, but I've had a lot of experience pretending to be a man, so—that wasn't new," Wall said.

Deja vu

Fostering safety within the LGBTQIA community—specifically among its dancers—has been a priority for Chicago's Mark Ferguson Gomez since he performed in *Dance for Life* more than 20 years ago. Under the auspices of Chicago Dancers United, *Dance for Life* is in its 29th year of raising money for the Chicago Dancers' Fund, where dancers can apply for financial relief. Gomez and his husband Tom Ferguson Gomez have chaired the annual DFL gala for years, but this year is their first time overseeing a virtual program.

"I've had friends say I don't seem too worried," he said. "I'm like, well, I've already been through something similar, something that was killing us and we didn't know what it was. With AIDS, we had to learn to navigate the unknown, the fear."

DFL 2020 (August 10-14) will feature past performances followed by an August 15 world premiere finale choreographed by Hanna Britson. It will also feature work by internationally renowned choreographer Randy Duncan, whose joy-infused 1994 ensemble piece "Lean on Me" is prominently posted on Chicago Dancers United website. "Who'd have thought something I created more than 20 years ago would hold so much resonance today?" Duncan said.

Duncan has thoughts for dancers staggering under the fist of COVID. "I tell dancers to hold on, better days are coming. We will get back. You can't let the despair swallow you up. Do what you can. Do classes in a park or wherever if your apartment is too small. But most of all, have faith. Believe," he said.

Garbage, galvanized

As the assistant director of Free Street

Theater's *Wasted*, Sebastian Olayo (alter ego: drag queen Cindy Nero) had to adapt fast when COVID shut down in-person rehearsals of a youth-devised exploration of environmental racism. The production Olayo describes as a mash-up of docudrama, John Oliver's *Last Week Tonight*, and an *SNL* skit was in rehearsal when the shutdown came.

"Some teens expressed being overwhelmed and ready to give up," Olayo said. "We told them, yes, we might feel hopeless or helpless, but we are not at a standstill. We are making a fully formed new work that we will share with the world. We're doing more work than anyone on Broadway right now. I am proud to say we didn't lose anyone. They all honored the ensemble and the work they'd already put in."

Broadly speaking

If anyone knows about keeping the faith in COVID times, it's Meghan Murphy. The cabaret artist was on a ship in the middle of the Indian Ocean when countries started closing their borders due to COVID-19. After failed attempts to dock in both Sri Lanka and India, the ship eventually stopped at Oman. Murphy headed home, and began work on *Adventures from a Broad*, a Patreon series that follows the singer as she traipses the world from the ruins of Rome to the tropics of Tanzania, the travelogue punctuated by numbers from a nightclub act that's played from Broadway to Boystown. She's donating a chunk of the proceeds to Brave Space Alliance, the first Black-led, trans-led LGBTQ center on the south side.

"It's giving me purpose in this time of, 'OK, what are we supposed to do now? Because live theater isn't going to happen for a minute,'" she said of the project. With theaters including the Mercury and iO announcing permanent closures, finding that purpose is paramount, she said.

"I think the Mercury closing could be a precursor," she added. "That doesn't mean art is going anywhere. And whereas I do believe theater isn't going anywhere, we simply cannot collectively continue in the same way theater has been operating in recent years. We must diversify the stories, elect more leadership positions to BIPOC, and honor and give power, not just responsibility, to the actual people making the art. It's time to pass the torch and redesign the whole thing." 

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The author shows off her Fly Honey chops.

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VIRTUAL CABARET

Honey, I'm home!

Amid pandemic and protest, the Fly Honeys stretch their wings.

By **SALLYANN PRICE**

On a Sunday afternoon in early April, feeling trapped at home and desperate for a dose of glamour, I threw together the sexiest outfit/attitude I could muster and tuned into an online dance workshop I'd heard about on Instagram. I needed to get my blood moving and I couldn't handle any more drizzly, chilly walks around the same few city blocks, avoiding eye contact with neighbors masked and unmasked. Feels like ages ago.

For one hour that weekend, in the privacy of my studio apartment, I shook out all my early-quarantine stress: the abrupt shift to remote work, the isolation of my living situation, and the pervasive, collective fear of exposure to inevitable illness, death, and/or utter financial ruin. NBD. I cleared a makeshift dance space and attempted moves that would make my Catholic mother blush. I don't remember the last time I felt so good in my body.

This was my first direct encounter with *The Fly Honey Show*, which hosted a wave of "Honey From Home" open dance workshops this spring through Instagram Live and Zoom. It was an unprecedented start to an uncertain

summer season for the cabaret ensemble, which marked ten years as a Chicago dance tradition last August with a well-attended run at the Den Theater in Wicker Park. I never managed to catch the show, which I've heard described as "part cabaret, part variety event, and part burlesque," with the feel of a "joyous private party."

I'll call my relationship with the Fly Honeys a social-media crush, as I was always bowled over by images of the performers' bold confidence and raw sexuality. Even more than the range of body types and skin tones and ink on display, they always seemed to me to represent a certain kind of cool-babe self-love. The classes cover about one minute each of choreography from a past season of the show, taught by one of the three members of the choreography team: Kasey Alfonso, Alyssa Gregory, and founder and director Erin Kilmurray.

I should admit up front that I'm not much of a dancer, nor am I particularly athletic. I'm also a person with Type 1 diabetes who relies on an insulin pump and feels awkward in group-fitness situations. But Kilmurray takes

issue with those stated limitations. She talks about dance like other people talk about yoga or mindfulness: It's something you practice. Make adjustments. Try something different.

"Choreography is a conduit for a feeling that you as a dancer can create for yourself," Kilmurray says. "You don't have to be 'good' at it. My goal is that we give the tools to each person who's practicing to make choices that feel right for you because of the story you're trying to tell."

It's still unclear to me exactly what story I was trying to tell in those early weeks of lockdown, or to whom. But over the course of six or seven classes, I gradually started to pick up more Fly Honey lingo. A "dancer's choice moment," for example, means taking however many counts of music to freestyle, to be present in the live experience, to add some hips or some shoulders or whatever feels right. Love on yourself. Make a choice. I'm also a fan of what I'm calling the "shoomp-shoomp," where you sort of throw everything to one side and then the other, a pleasingly symmetrical one-two punch.

"We're well versed in the practice of making material that gives people the choice to work with what they've got, whether that's their bodies, or their dance experience, or the room that they're in," Kilmurray says. The group had hosted citywide in-person workshops in springs past, so "that's already built into our culture and our class culture."

The Instagram Live videos indulge a pretty luxe backstage-showgirl fantasy, if you ask me. Kilmurray says it seems to be a decent mix of newcomers, like me, and former ensemble members or otherwise known quantities. The online open-level workshops this spring attracted about 50-60 people each—certainly more than one could reasonably fit in your average dance studio. Kilmurray says the workshops, which have been free of charge with a suggested donation of \$5 per class, have been self-sustaining for the teaching artists and administrative side.

One Friday night, Kilmurray teaches a tease from a few seasons ago, set to "Pony" by Ginuwine. She offers some storytelling options around the flirtatious choreography: the idea is that you're dancing to the left wall, whether that's your partner, or an imagined audience member who's caught your eye, or your cat, or your couch. Keep returning to that sightline and think about who you're dancing for.

"The culture that my team and I work really hard to create is deeply embedded in the idea of togetherness and allowing for the dancers and the witnesses—I say witnesses because the dancers are also each others' witnesses, right? It's not just the audience—to exchange energy," Kilmurray says. "To adapt that in the virtual world was certainly a challenge."

The "Honey From Home" project evolved from week to week before hitting pause in June, while the Honeys rest their wings and rethink what this year's "Honey Season" might look like. Advanced workshops were added on the Zoom platform on Monday mornings. The choreography team established a "Honey Hotline" to ensure communication between the class instructor and the live audience learning and rehearsing at home. And the world kept turning (hardly twirling) around us.

Gregory wore a Black Lives Matter shirt as she taught a class on Sunday, May 31, the first weekend that police protests seemingly engulfed the city in a collective flame, licking and raging and fusing together and splitting apart.

"That day was insanely hard," recalls Gregory, who doubles as the organization's social media manager, of the morning after the mayor's first curfew. Though she felt deeply supported by her team, she felt a responsibility to show up to work: "For me, my body experiencing any moment of joy is an act of resistance. I don't want to give this so much power that I can't do my job. . . . In hindsight, I didn't realize until I started the live video and going over choreography how OK I actually wasn't."

The decision to shift donations to charities in light of the recent police protests made immediate sense to the group's leadership. Over the course of the first week of June the Fly Honeys saw a spike in giving when they announced a fund-raiser for Black Visions Collective, a Minneapolis-based social justice organization, and the south side's Brave Space Alliance (after the flooded Chicago Community Bond Fund encouraged donors to shift their giving to other organizations in need). They raised a total of \$2,669 for the two groups.

"Fly Honey is a body-based performance project," Kilmurray says. "Bodies and space are political, no matter what space they're in and whose they are. We're doing what we can with the resources we have to contribute to the movement. It's really as simple as that. It doesn't feel like a radical gesture."

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READER

NO COPS AT PRIDE?

Why police presence at Pride parades is a contentious issue *By Rachel Hawley*

This year's Pride parade may be canceled, but there's one question about the annual march that is as relevant as ever—should police be allowed at Pride?



Last year, a number of cities in the United States and Canada chose to bar uniformed officers from marching in their parades. While Sacramento and St. Louis eventually reversed these bans after facing backlash, organizers in cities like Minneapolis stood by their message: no cops at Pride.

This resistance to a police presence at Pride goes back to the event's inception. Throughout the 1950s and '60s, gay bars and establishments were regular targets of police raids and violence. The riots that arose in response to the raid at the Stonewall Inn in June of 1969 sparked the gay liberation movement as we now know it: as some people like to say,

THE FIRST PRIDE
WAS A RIOT!



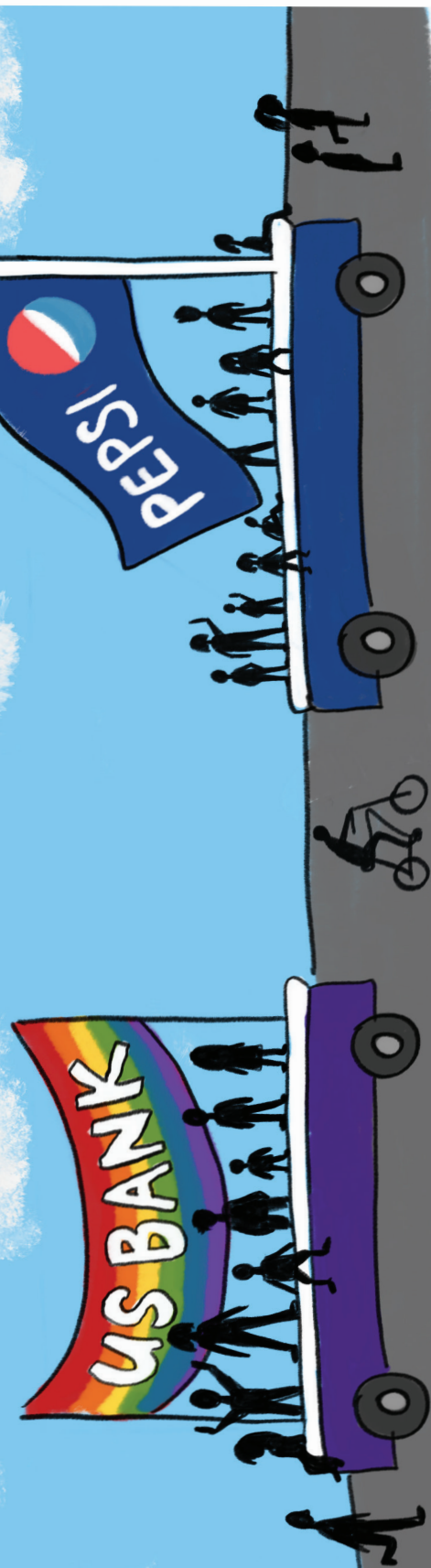
Police departments have largely not been held accountable for their history of violence towards LGBTQ people. The NYPD only formally apologized for the Stonewall raid in 2019, 50 years too late. So it's easy to imagine, given this legacy, why many LGBTQ activists would take a firm stance against police participation in an event commemorating an uprising against the police themselves.



The "cops-at-Pride" debate isn't just about reckoning with the past. It's also a present-day issue: the violence of policing and the prison industrial complex is still an ongoing threat to LGBTQ people, particularly queer and trans people of color and sex workers.



This movement is just one piece of an ongoing struggle between those who wish to keep Pride events rooted in the radical politics of their origin, and the bowdlerization that often accompanies entering the mainstream. Between increasing participation of massive corporations in the parades, and the continued presence of police, it's hard not to feel like the politics of Pride have been greatly defanged.



NO COPS
AT PRIDE



The nationwide uprisings of the past month have created a seismic shift in popular opinion toward the police as an institution. As abolitionist thought becomes more widely embraced, it's hard to imagine that the role of police in Pride events won't fall under closer scrutiny next year, when the parades resume. But only time will tell.



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pride



Victor and Victoria

PRIDE

Film has always been queer

Pioneers of Queer Cinema highlights the history of LGBTQ stories in movies.

By CODY CORRALL

It's safe to say that there are more stories being told by queer filmmakers than ever before, and which are even more diverse in recent years not just in terms of representation, but also in narrative and form. But queer people have existed forever—even in film!—and it's imperative to immerse ourselves in our own history. *Pioneers of Queer Cinema*, available through Kino Lorber's virtual cinema Kino Marquee, highlights classic queer films that paved the way for our current landscape, many of which have been less than accessible to modern audiences—and which explore themes of gender and sexuality that ring just as true now as they did when they were made.

Michael (1924)

Directed by Carl Theodor Dreyer

Before there was *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*, Carl Theodor Dreyer's silent marvel *Michael* examined gay desire through the relationship between an artist and his muse. Based on Herman Bang's 1902 novel *Mikaël*, the film follows

a tenuous and intimate partnership between acclaimed painter Claude Zoret (Benjamin Christensen) and his young assistant Michael (Walter Slezak) that becomes upended when Michael falls for a countess whom Claude is commissioned to paint. *Michael* is a delicate look at loneliness and loving someone as an expression of one's art when that love cannot be reciprocated in reality, paralleled with mesmerizing cinematography from Karl Freund and Rudolph Maté that manages to encapsulate the fantasy of desire and art. *Michael* might be an overlooked gem in Dreyer's extensive filmography—from *The Passion of Joan of Arc* to *Vampyr* to *Ordet*—but it holds its own not just through its stunning technical prowess, but also in its surprising cultural longevity.

Mädchen in Uniform (1931)

Directed by Leontine Sagan

Heralded as one of the earliest lesbian feature-length films ever made—and certainly

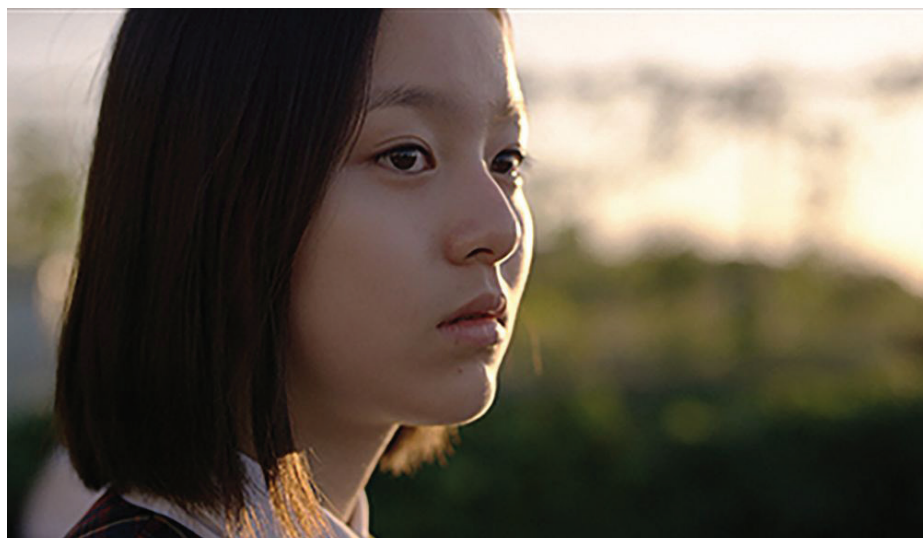
the only one produced in Germany during the rise of the Nazi Party—*Mädchen in Uniform* is more than deserving of its radical cinematic legacy. Adapted from Christa Winsloe's play *Gestern und heute*, *Mädchen in Uniform* explores a forbidden relationship between Manuela (Hertha Thiele), a new student at an all-girls boarding school, and one of her teachers (Dorothea Wieck). Rumors of their relationship wreak havoc on the boarding school's elite image—and they are forced to face the consequences of the love that has been deemed shameful by the institution, be it through expulsion or treatment of this supposed illness. *Mädchen in Uniform* is an interesting piece of the classical queer film canon as it refuses to lean into the territory of unrequited love—a trope that has only gained in popularity in recent years. Instead of one woman pining over the other to no avail or at the risk of being seen as predatory, the film ruminates on the complexities of a first love that is returned. The film doesn't critique their relationship but the persecution of it, and the fundamental inequities that stem from someone being allowed to wield power over another.

Victor and Victoria (1933)

Directed by Reinhold Schünzel

If you're a consumer of queer and transgender cinema, you may already be familiar with Blake Edwards's Julie Andrews-fronted musical *Victor/Victoria* (or the 1995 stage musical also fronted by Andrews). But the original 1933 version from German filmmaker Reinhold Schünzel—which tragically did not get much circulation in the United States at the time—is just as delightful as its sequin-clad remakes. Susanne (Renate Müller) is an aspiring entertainer, but can't seem to get any work despite her burgeoning talent. Her opportunities explode, however, when she pretends to be a man doing drag as a woman, but juggling her personal life, her career, and her various identities becomes overwhelming, especially when she finds herself falling for her producer, who has only seen her as a man. *Victor and Victoria* is charming as a musical comedy, but it is also a remarkably poignant commentary on the performance—and illusion—of gender far before the likes of Judith Butler and other feminist scholars would do the same. 

 @codycorrall



House of Hummingbird

NOW PLAYING

Beats

A jaunty, rollicking ride, this black-and-white film follows two teenage boys in Scotland in 1994. Jonno (Cristian Ortega) is a moody but quiet adolescent, struggling to come to terms with an impending move to a better neighborhood, as well as the presence of his mother's new cop boyfriend. Spanner (Lorn MacDonald) lives with his brother, Fido, in a violent, barely-held-together household. The two are best friends, unlikely but inseparable, and as they grapple with their increasingly divergent lives, they decide to go to an illegal rave for one last night of fun. Touching on themes of deindustrialization and disillusionment, director Brian Welsh carefully constructs this gritty portrayal of a northern Scottish town in the early 1990s. —**NINA LI COOMES** 101 min. [Music Box Theatre Virtual Cinema](#)

RR Ella Fitzgerald: Just One of Those Things

I'm always surprised when documentaries about legacy musicians seem content to speak primarily to existing fans, without fully capturing the energy their subjects brought to the table during their time or their ongoing influence. But from the first minutes of *Ella Fitzgerald: Just One of Those Things*, this profile on the "First Lady of Song" presents a different tone: the film opens with famed dancer and comedian Norma Miller describing how she watched a young, homeless teen named Ella Fitzgerald win *Amateur Night* at the Apollo Theater in 1934. The rest, as they say, is history. Through interviews with friends and colleagues—generations of musicians including Smokey Robinson, Laura Mvula, Alexis Morast, and, notably, Fitzgerald's son, Ray Brown Jr.—the film showcases how Fitzgerald's sheer talent, resilience, and hard work helped her overcome personal tragedy, loneliness, racism, and gender-based bias to become one of the most notable figures of the 20th century. Just like her music, Fitzgerald's story is timeless, and

this film's arrival just as the Black Lives Matter movement has grown momentum as a global phenomenon underlines that even more. —**JAMIE LUDWIG** 90 min. [Gene Siskel Film Center From Your Sofa](#)

RR House of Hummingbird

Director Kim Bora paints an airy watercolor portrait in this 2018 film about a 14-year-old girl living in Seoul in 1994. Eun-hee (Park Ji-hoo) flits around the city, like the titular hummingbird, from school's oppressive boredom to her volatile home, searching for affection in teachers, friends, boyfriends, and girlfriends. Perfectly capturing the listless searching feeling characteristic of early adolescence, this movie is delicate and subtle, never verging into saccharine sentimentality, but instead delivering a stunning emotional slow burn. With an easy, lingering tempo and stunning frames shot through with light, this South Korean drama leaves the viewer with a sense of contemplative midsummer lassitude. Korean with subtitles. —**NINA LI COOMES** 138 min. [Music Box Theatre Virtual Cinema](#)

The Invisible Witness

I'm usually too impatient to read mystery novels—inevitably I find myself fighting the impulse to thumb ahead and satiate my curiosity—but mystery in cinema assuages my occasional urge to ask "Whodunit?" This 2018 film by Italian director Stefano Mordini (based on a Spanish film by Oriol Paulo from two years prior) isn't anything to write home about, but it sure is fun to watch; if anything, its relative artlessness underscores the gratifying, though somewhat unwieldy, plot. After a tech entrepreneur (Riccardo Scamarcio) wakes up in a hotel room to find his mistress (Miriam Leone) murdered, authorities are quick to accuse him of killing her. Insistent that he's been framed, a revered lawyer (Maria Paiato) comes in to help suss out the entrepreneur's story, which soon involves an unfortunate car accident and an unlikely revenge scheme. The best parts occur

when you think you've clinched the plot, only to have it go one—or two or three—steps further. The overserious giallo vibes add to the fun; it takes itself seriously so you don't have to. In Italian with subtitles. —**KATHLEEN SACHS** 102 min. [Gene Siskel Film Center From Your Sofa](#)

RR The Last Tree

In England in the early 2000s, Femi (played by Tai Golding as a child, then Sam Adewunmi as an adult) is reunited with his birth mother after having lived with a white foster mother in the idyllic rural countryside. The two return to London, where Femi grows into a troubled young man who resists authority both at home and at school, instead finding camaraderie on the streets. British-Nigerian writer-director Shola Amoo's semi-autobiographical sophomore feature has been called the "British *Moonlight*"; it's reminiscent of other coming-of-age dramas yet still wholly unique, owing to the specificity that Amoo brings to it. Eventually Femi begins to question his choices and comes to terms with facets of his life that had been frustrating him; this is partly realized through a trip he and his mother take to Lagos, which helps put their fraught relationship

into perspective. Amoo packs a lot in—sometimes too much—and the filmmaking is often frenetic, but what he has to say needs to be heard. —**KATHLEEN SACHS** 98 min. 6/26-7/9, [Facets Virtual Cinema](#)

You Should Have Left

You Should Have Left is a third-place movie. Literally, it is the third of three horror movies released in the last six months about a dad and his second-try family going on a bond-building getaway only to find themselves fighting to survive. It also happens that the other two films, *The Lodge* and *Becky*, are better. While Blumhouse Productions brings the star power with the excellent Kevin Bacon and Amanda Seyfried, it lacks elsewhere. The couple's marriage (yes, they address the age gap) is crumbling, so they book a modern home in the Welsh countryside and bring their daughter. Soon, Theo's (Bacon) grasp on reality begins to unravel, setting up psychological twists and turns, which the house mimics physically à la *Rose Red*. However, his big reveal is as predictable as Susanna's (Seyfried) smaller one, which leaves little to look forward to but an explanation of the house's history, which never comes. —**BECCA JAMES** R, 93 min. [In wide release on VOD](#)

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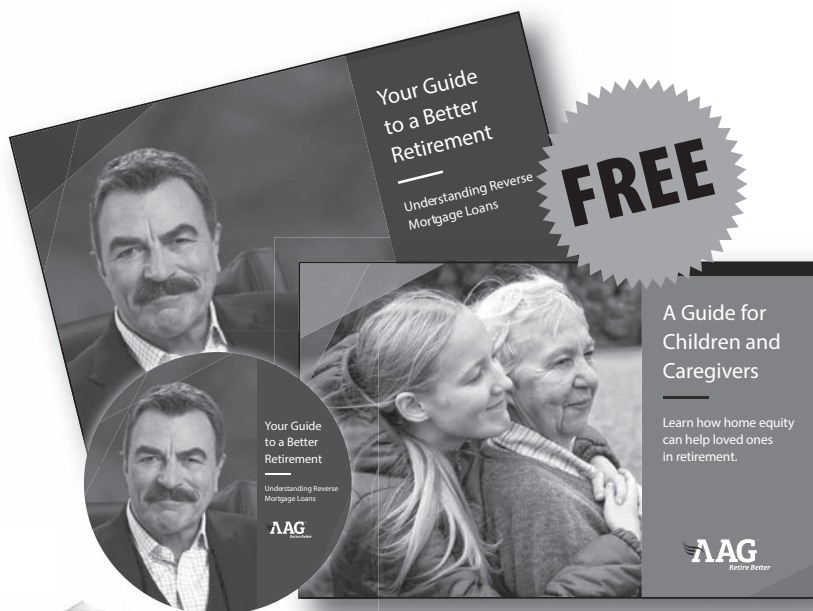
For example, a lot of people mistakenly believe the home must be paid off in full in order to qualify for a HECM loan, which is not the case. In fact, one key advantage of a HECM is that the proceeds will first be used to pay off any existing liens on the property, which frees up cash flow, a huge blessing for seniors living on a fixed income. Unfortunately, many senior homeowners who might be better off with a HECM loan don't even bother to get more information because of rumors they've heard.

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CHICAGO PUNK WAS BORN QUEER

How three gay bars—La Mere Vipere, O'Banion's, and Oz—became the cradle of the city's punk scene

BY
LEOR
GALIL

The Sex Pistols rewired lots of young minds in 1976, when they began their scorched-earth climb to infamy in London—and within little more than a year, their music had also changed the life of a 24-year-old in Chicago named Terry Fox. On a Sunday night in August 1977, Fox and a couple friends were walking north on Halsted Street in Lincoln Park when someone opened the front door of a squat A-frame nearby and a burst of noise rushed out. “It sounded like TNT going off, there was flashing neon lights—and then the door closed,” Fox says. Though he was surrounded by music at the time—he had a warehouse job with the M.S. Distributing Company in Morton Grove—he’d never heard anything like that sound.

“I opened the door, and Kenny Ellis—who was the doorman—was standing there,” Fox



says. “I said, ‘What is this place?’ And he goes, ‘La Mere Vipere—it’s the mother of the snake.’ And I go, ‘What kind of music is this?’ He said, ‘Punk rock, man. It’s cool.’” And though it might seem too on the nose to be true, Fox swears the song that brought him into La Mere was the Sex Pistols’ debut single, “Anarchy in the U.K.”

In August 1977, the Sex Pistols had already been signed and then dropped by a couple major labels in the UK, but they were yet to close their deal with Warner Brothers, which that November would release the U.S. version of their first and only proper album, *Never Mind the Bollocks, Here’s the Sex Pistols*. EMI had issued “Anarchy in the U.K.” in the UK in November 1976, but the label dissolved their contract with the band less than two months later. The circumstances made it hard to hear the Pistols in the States, never mind Chicago. Difficult, but not impossible: you could hear them at La Mere Vipere, Chicago’s first punk disco.

Located at 2132 N. Halsted, La Mere Vipere had only just gone punk when Fox stumbled across it. Its first punk night, “Anarchy at La Mere,” was on May 8, 1977. The night quickly became a weekly happening, and La Mere began to attract a hodgepodge of newcomers eager to dance to the Pistols, the Ramones, and Blondie. At the end of June, La Mere threw a three-night party called “Punk-o-Rama,” completing its transition. Central to the success of the club’s new identity was its old identity: La Mere Vipere had opened in February 1976 as a gay bar. Because it was already a welcoming space for people cut off from the mainstream, it made a natural home for a fringe subculture with queer roots.

La Mere would only last as a punk disco for a little more than 11 months—it closed after a mysterious fire in April 1978. But its brief run has reverberated for decades, in Chicago and beyond. It nurtured a local scene whose influence is still being felt: among the regulars were punk pioneer Jim Skafish and confrontational pranksters Tutu & the Pirates (one of a few plausible candidates for Chicago’s first punk band), and several members of the glammy, R&B-inflected B.B. Spin worked at the bar. On a trip here from New York, Steve Maas was so smitten by a chance visit to La Mere that he was inspired to create something similar back home, cofounding the famous Mudd Club in October 1978.

La Mere didn’t host live music often. At first the punk scene coalesced around records and DJs, not shows—at the time, clubs booked

mostly cover bands, and hardly any local punk bands existed yet anyway. It was a place where people who loved the emerging punk counter-culture could hear the music and dance to it. The club was so important to the emerging punk community that it was name-checked by Chicago’s first punk fanzine, the *La Mere Gabba Gabba Gazette*.

After the fire closed La Mere, two other bars filled its niche: O’Banion’s in River North and Oz in Rogers Park, which later moved to River North and then Lakeview. By 1979 they’d both started hosting emerging local punk bands, who often had nowhere else to play. Many of those bands contributed to a live 1981 compilation album recorded at Oz’s third and final location, called *Busted at Oz*—a landmark document of the Chicago punk scene, it features some of the first recordings by the likes of Naked Raygun, Silver Abuse, and the Effigies. Though neither O’Banion’s nor Oz would survive past 1982, they were critical to helping punk flourish in Chicago—and like La Mere, they started and to some degree continued to operate as gay bars.

In their recent book, *Glitter Up the Dark: How Pop Music Broke the Binary*, music critic and *Reader* contributor Sasha Geffen provides detailed insight into the ways queer and gender-nonconforming artists shaped pop music—including punk and its antecedent, glam rock. Geffen’s book made me curious about the intersection of gay bars and the punk scene in Chicago. Punks and queer people were both marginalized, but for very different reasons. How and why did this intersection happen in the first place? And how did queer culture influence the character of Chicago punk?

“I have always pointed out the fact that punk really grew in Chicago out of queer culture,” says Oz owner Dem Hopkins, who booked the bar’s bands and briefly managed the Effigies. In his eyes, there’s no question that at the beginning, punk and queer culture went hand in hand. “They’re inextricably linked,” he says. “If you’re gonna look at queer bar culture in the 70s, there’s two paths: one is to disco, and one is to punk rock.”

By the time La Mere Vipere owners Noah “Noe” Boudreau and Tom Wroblewski birthed the city’s first punk disco, they had been running a gay bar at 2628 N. Halsted called the Snake Pit for years. “It was a really sleazy little dive bar that basically was decorated for every holiday. They never took the stuff down—they kept adding

to it constantly,” says Snake Pit regular Mike “Sparkle” Rivers, who’d moved to Chicago from Detroit in the early 70s with his partner, John “Taco” Morales. Rivers particularly liked the Snake Pit’s eclectic jukebox, whose selections included Barry White, David Bowie, and Roxy Music—Boudreau and Wroblewski even let people bring in their own records to play on it.

The Snake Pit drew an irreverent crowd of gay and straight people, including many artists and actors. It stood in contrast to Dugan’s Bistro, a hot River North gay disco that had opened in 1973. The Snake Pit and its owners didn’t aspire to the glamour of the Bistro or other mainstream queer spaces; musically and otherwise, they aimed for something stranger and sleazier, and they were open to straight artists who shared this attitude. The bar’s subversion of an already subversive counter-culture appealed to Rivers, and he started bartending there a couple nights a week.

“The Snake Pit was just such a weird bar,” Rivers says. “Back then, gay people were very conservative, ’cause a lot of them had to live in the closet—but when they were gay, they were like, *really* gay. A primary part of my life was never that I was gay, ’cause I never cared that I was gay.”

Rivers also held down a job at Sounds Good Records on Broadway near Belmont, which stocked lots of disco 12-inches and glam-rock albums for the neighborhood’s gay clientele, including a healthy selection of imports. By 1976, Rivers had become an assistant manager at the shop, and as punk began to break out in the UK, Sounds Good started selling the Sex Pistols, the Ramones, and other punk releases from both sides of the pond. Rivers saw punk as an extension of the glam he loved, and within a couple years Sounds Good had become a destination for fans of the Village People as well as fans of Richard Hell & the Voidoids. “It was kind of like a culture clash, but the two cultures were both based on minority culture,” he says. “That’s why I think the punk scene was so accepting of the whole gay side of it.”

The shop’s gay disco fans didn’t seem to mind punk. “It bothered some of the straight people, because sometimes we’d be playing it—it was just a different vibe,” says John Molini, another Sounds Good manager. “You’re not gonna be blasting ‘God Save the Queen’ on a crowded Saturday. I don’t think the Carly Simon crowd is gonna like that.”

Punk remained a fringe concern locally in 1977. By that spring, Boudreau and Wroblewski were already struggling to stay in the black

at La Mere Vipere. They’d opened it as a disco with the same nonconformist attitude as the Snake Pit, with a bar on the second floor, neon palm trees and flamingos on the walls, and barstools decked out in leopard print. The dance floor, walled in by exposed brick, took up most of the ground floor, and the DJs’ sets included the Isley Brothers, Donna Summer, and Love Unlimited. But La Mere just wasn’t a big draw. “Because it was Tom and Noe’s bar, a lot of the big gay crowd didn’t go there,” Rivers says. “Because it wasn’t ‘cool.’ It wasn’t a ‘real’ gay bar.”

Rivers was bartending at La Mere when he pitched Boudreau and Wroblewski the idea of hosting a punk night. They decided to take a gamble on a Sunday night—Mother’s Day, to be exact—since gay bars didn’t draw a lot of foot traffic on Sundays anyway. Molini and fellow Sounds Good employee Rick Faust helped Rivers plan what became Anarchy at La Mere. They took out an ad in the *Reader* and spread word through the shop. They charged a \$1 cover, which Molini collected at the door, and Rivers and Faust helped DJ.

La Mere’s first punk night didn’t cause much commotion in Chicago’s mainstream gay community, to the extent that anyone noticed it at all. The club was already a punk hot spot by the time Ralph Paul addressed its makeover in his lifestyle column for the October 1977 issue of *Gay Chicago News/Journal*, and his brief note sounds more bemused and curious than offended: “Swinging from a try at being a gay disco the La Mere Vipere has become the headline Punk Rock Palace for the Windy City. Punks I’ve been told have no sexual preference but it is attracting many curious about the new wave.”

Future Oz proprietor Dem Hopkins also appears in that month’s *Gay Chicago News/Journal*. He’d led an all-night vigil outside Tribune Tower after the *Tribune* refused to run an ad for Lend-a-Man (later renamed Benchmark), a gay employment agency he co-owned. The August issue of *GC News/Journal* had already reported on Lend-a-Man’s trouble placing ads in mainstream papers; in October it published a letter from Hopkins’s business partner, Dick Nielsen, updating readers with news that the *Tribune* had backed down and agreed to run a slightly altered ad.

Hopkins would run afoul of at least part of the mainstream gay community in mid-1978, after he turned the Greenleaf, the gay bar he owned, into Oz. “There were people in the queer community—especially established queer media—who felt like it was some kind of



betrayal, not going along with the disco craze,” Hopkins says. “Also, they didn’t like the fact that there were more and more straights in the club. I thought that was a great thing, but at the time, the queer bars were very segregated. They really weren’t looking to have straight people in their bars.”

Though some queer Chicagoans didn’t like the idea of punks taking over gay bars, others didn’t consider the likes of Oz and La Mere proper gay bars in the first place. That schism in the community—along with bar owners’ need to find patrons wherever they could—allowed Chicago punk to thrive.

Word that a gay bar was hosting a punk night reached Mary Alice Ramel-Hoeksema through a coworker at the downtown location of Rolling Stones Records. “I was fascinated by the underground scene that was going on in New York and London—the punk stuff—and the minute we had an opportunity to do something in Chicago, I jumped at it,” she says. Ramel-Hoeksema went to Anarchy at La Mere, where she met the woman who’d become her best friend in the scene, Jeanne Genie. Within a few weeks, they had befriended Boudreau, and together they launched a fanzine: the *La Mere Gabba Gabba Gazette*. Ramel-Hoeksema was the editor in chief, Genie was assistant editor, and Boudreau wrote the gossip column.

Ramel-Hoeksema had been a scenester for a while before she arrived at La Mere—she’d even become friends with Roger Powell, the synth player in Todd Rundgren’s band Utopia—but she didn’t look the part. She thought of herself as plain, and she didn’t try to fit in—she never even bothered to try on a black leather jacket. At La Mere, it didn’t matter.

“One of the things I always remember is when Jeanne looked at me and said, ‘Oh my God, look around, we’re the kids nobody wanted to be friends with in high school—we’re the misfits,’” Ramel-Hoeksema says. “I don’t know that I would have described myself that way, but in that setting that was very true. I was there because I wasn’t fitting into any other scene that I could think of. When I was there, it was like there were no judgments—just fun, just music.”

Monica Lynch, who became a bartender at La Mere after it went punk, credits the club’s success as a punk disco to its beginnings as a countercultural gay bar. “I think it really helped set the tone of inclusiveness,” she says.

“IF YOU’RE GONNA LOOK AT QUEER BAR CULTURE IN THE 70S, THERE’S TWO PATHS:

“It was queer kids that wouldn’t necessarily fit in within the aesthetic of gay discos, and their lady friends. And people who were reading about the emerging punk scene and didn’t necessarily have a scene of their own.”

Lynch had previously worked at the Bistro as the club’s first female go-go dancer. While she slung drinks at La Mere, she also worked as an in-house model for designer Billy Falcon. For the second night of La Mere’s Punk-o-Rama extravaganza in June 1977, she cohosted a punk fashion show with her friend Steve “Spin” Miglio. The scene hadn’t yet developed a “look,” so the models dressed however they pleased; Miglio wore a parachute fitted to his body like a hooded cassock, with scraps of raw meat sewn to the front. “This is Chicago, so it was a little bit tamer, visually, but there were a lot of kids there that were just doing their thing,” Lynch says. “There wasn’t another place for Skafish to do his thing.”

Jim Skafish had already achieved an impressive degree of local infamy by the time La Mere hosted its first Anarchy night. His music thrived on confrontation—his anti-gay-bashing song “Knuckle Sandwich,” for instance, adopted the perspective of a belligerent homophobe. When his band, also called Skafish, opened for Sha Na Na at the Arie Crown Theater on February 4, 1977, they provoked boos and a hail of projectiles from the audience. “I stripped down to an old lady’s

old-fashioned one-piece bathing suit with a matching babushka, applying lipstick to my face, and the audience completely erupted,” Skafish says. “They were right on the verge of rushing the stage—the Chicago police stopped the show.” In a haughtily dismissive *Billboard* review, Alan Penchansky almost admitted that he didn’t get it, but instead mostly fixated on Skafish’s “transsexual narcissism” and aggressively odd gender presentation.

When La Mere went punk a few months later, Skafish heard about it from his fans, and he started visiting early in the club’s brief run. “It was paradise,” he says. “I would refer to it like the summer of love, punk style—it’s exactly what it was like. You could be gay, straight, transgender, you don’t want to be classified, you might be having a sex change, you might dress in drag, guys dance on the dance floor with guys, girls dance with girls, guys use the girls’ bathroom, girls use the guys’ bathroom—that’s the way it went, OK?”

La Mere also offered Skafish a place to express himself without fear of violent harassment. “For somebody like me, who was being bullied every day and being attacked onstage, offstage having guns pulled on me, people attacking me all the time,” he says, “this is a place I felt safe.”

Skafish was one of only a handful of musicians to perform live at La Mere—also on that short list are Tutu & the Pirates and B.B. Spin,

whose members included Molini, Miglio, and Lynch (who referred to her role as “lead hair-do”). DJs reigned supreme at La Mere, though the nature of the music made their jobs unusually taxing. “It wasn’t like you put on seven-minute disco songs,” Rivers says. “You had two- and three-minute punk songs; you had to do a slam mix into the next song. You’d only DJ for an hour at a time, and then somebody else would take over.”

Punk songs generally didn’t have specific moves or dances that went with them—pogoing, shimmying, and all sorts of uncoordinated flailing and jumping around were all welcome at La Mere Vipere. One thing dancers did need, though, was stamina. “It was like, ‘How long can you dance? Can you dance for 30, 40 minutes to punk-rock records at the speed of 130 beats or 140 beats per minute?’” says Metro owner Joe Shanahan. “You were happy when a reggae record came on—you could slow down a little bit.”

Shanahan was enrolled at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale when he discovered La Mere. On the weekends, he’d organize visits to Chicago by groups of like-minded students—he’d pool everyone’s money and they’d pile into a station wagon, which he called the “Carbondale art music limousine service.” Their trips usually included stops at La Mere at night. Shanahan noticed the prominence of the DJ booth, which sat in an elevated box on the west wall of La Mere’s lower level. “I always thought a lot of places didn’t really take the DJ booth very seriously,” he says. “But gay culture and gay clubs always said, ‘The DJ is a very important fixture.’ That comes straight out of the Warehouse and the Paradise Garage.”

In his role as scene figurehead, Boudreau not only wrote for the *Gabba Gabba Gazette* and tended bar, he also DJed. “He would not only play straight punk, but he would mix it in with soul, rockabilly, and all sorts of stuff,” says La Mere doorman Ken Ellis, who calls his old boss “the founding father of the Chicago punk-bar scene.” And Ellis knew a good mix when he heard one: prior to discovering La Mere, he’d spent his nights disco dancing at gay clubs, which were hospitable to young Black men (even straight ones). “All the straight disco bars back then—the mid-70s—were kind of racist,” he says. “If you really wanted to party, you had to go to the gay bars.”

Ellis and his friends first stopped into La Mere while club hopping on a night out. “Everything changed from that point on,” he says. “I thought, ‘God, this is the best place on



earth—the mixture of people, the music that was playing, the energy. It was like nothing you had ever seen before.’ I just threw away all my suits after that. I ripped up some T-shirts, and next thing you know I’m there almost as much as possible.” The night Groucho Marx died, Ellis and a couple friends walked into La Mere dressed as the Marx Brothers, which tickled Boudreau; Ellis began working as the doorman shortly afterward.

When La Mere closed each night at 2 AM, regulars usually didn’t want to go right home—often the party would continue at other gay bars. “We would go to Cheeks, Paradise, Dugan’s Bistro,” Fox says. “We would go to all these gay bars and just keep dancing to disco, it didn’t matter to us—you went with the gay people from the bar to where they would go.”

Sometimes the regulars hosted afterparties in their homes instead—Fox threw a few in his tiny apartment, which was in a complex on Lincoln that a friend of his owned. (Fox helped so many folks he knew from La Mere move in there that he nicknamed it the “punk-rock dorm.”) One of his parties happened after Ramel-Hoeksema walked into La Mere late one night with Elvis Costello & the Attractions. “I put about 50 people in a one-bedroom with a galley kitchen—we were there for like four hours,” Fox says. “Elvis Costello basically sat on the couch and didn’t talk to anybody the whole night.”

When Ramel-Hoeksema wrote for the *La Mere Gabba Gabba Gazette*, she didn’t have much trouble landing interviews with key figures in punk. She had a harder time protecting the scene she cared so much about. She says that within six months of La Mere’s first Anarchy night, the club and its original core of punk regulars couldn’t meaningfully claim ownership of the scene anymore—it had grown to the point that it was attracting what she calls “tourists.” She dropped “La Mere” from the title of the zine for its fifth issue in November 1977. “It didn’t take that long for La Mere, I feel, to become invaded by the people who didn’t like us in high school,” she says.

This trend was doubtless accelerated by the exposure La Mere got from June’s Punk-o-Rama extravaganza. On July 11, 1977, *Time* magazine ran a trend piece on the international rise of punk; it included photos of La Mere revelers, including the famous Bearded Lady from the Bistro and Miglio in his meat suit, next to a shot of Johnny Rotten. The story

didn’t mention La Mere Vipere by name, but four days later the *Tribune* published an article about the club.

As outsiders flocked to La Mere, Ramel-Hoeksema and Boudreau argued about the club’s direction. “I wanted this place to stay this pure kind of private space,” Ramel-Hoeksema says. “He used to say, ‘No, we can’t keep people out—we can’t be the judge of who comes in.’ It just started losing its sparkle after a while.”

Some of Boudreau’s choices rubbed Rivers the wrong way too. La Mere had become a sort of home base for the work of Michael Cegur, a bizarre performance artist who called himself Beluga. Boudreau saw Beluga as La Mere’s answer to the Bistro’s Bearded Lady, but Rivers didn’t care for the act, which involved lots of costume changes and odd monologues. When Rivers dropped by La Mere on a night off and saw Beluga, something snapped. “I lifted my leg and tried to pee on Beluga, so I got fired,” he says. “Or I quit. I don’t remember.”

As La Mere grew in popularity in early 1978, other regulars left too. When Ramel-Hoeksema threw a drink at a strange woman who’d been pushing her, Boudreau banned her from the bar. Lynch moved to New York in April. That same month, La Mere burned.

In his Chicago scene report for *Bomp!* magazine’s 20th issue, Cary Baker wrote about the fire, noting that the official cause was an elec-

trical malfunction. He added, “There is little doubt amon [*sic*] the regulars that its death came by arson.”

La Mere regulars didn’t know where else to go to hear punk, but a DJ named Nancy Rapchak had an idea. Before she’d started going to La Mere, she’d already made a habit of spending her free evenings at gay bars—she knew she wouldn’t be harassed by straight men at the Bistro. Rapchak had taken a liking to a divey gay bar called O’Banion’s, a few blocks north of the Bistro at 661 N. Clark. Its dance floor abutted the bar, and the premises were in disrepair. One of the owners, Russell Clancy, would play Linda Ronstadt’s “Desperado” in the bar when he was sad. The state of his business was such that he played it frequently.

Nancy suggested Clancy host a punk night at O’Banion’s, and enlisted Ellis and another La Mere doorman, Bob Bell, to help make her case. On a Saturday night in June 1978, Clancy gave it a shot; Rivers and a tag team of La Mere veterans spun records. Rapchak couldn’t make it—she’d been juggling DJ gigs at lesbian bar Marilyn’s and gay bar Sunday’s. “Russell was such a great guy that he kept a spot open for me,” she says.

Fox says that 700 people passed through O’Banion’s that first night. By early 1979, O’Banion’s had gone all-in on punk, though its dwindling gay clientele held on during daytime

hours—the punks only came out at night. Fox quit his job at Sounds Good to manage O’Banion’s after he showed up to DJ on Saint Patrick’s Day 1979 to find the bar in disorder and no one on hand to work the night shift—he cleaned the place up, called bartenders to come in, and worked the floor. At the time, Fox fronted the band Clox, and managing gave him the flexibility to play gigs.

Ellis worked the door at the newly punk O’Banion’s. “In the early days it was real fun, but a lot of the spillover people could get nasty,” he says. “I had some drag queen threaten to slice my throat open ‘cause I wouldn’t let him in—he didn’t want to pay the buck-fifty, two-buck cover charge.”

Bill Meehan and his bandmates in Silver Abuse came up with their own way to weasel out of paying full price. “We’d dress ourselves up with aluminum foil, chain ourselves together at the ankle, and then demand to get into O’Banion’s for one cover charge because we were a single entity,” Meehan says.

O’Banion’s soon brought in a big suburban crowd eager to experience punk for the first time. “A lot of the punks hated the suburbanites, because they were poseurs,” Rivers says. “But they came, they liked the music, they had fun, and most of them were pretty cute.”

Rivers took a liking to a young suburbanite he nicknamed “the Surf”—his blonde hair made Rivers think of a surfer. “I’ll never forget—one night, he came up to me and said, ‘Sparkle, I just told these guys off because they said that I was a poseur and I didn’t belong here, that I was a suburbanite,’” Rivers says. “I said, ‘Don’t you know who I am? I’m the Surf! I’m friends with Sparkle! So don’t tell me I don’t belong here!’” It was funny, it kind of did change a lot of those suburban attitudes.”

Ken Mierzwa was a student at Northeastern Illinois University when he discovered O’Banion’s in summer 1978. Growing up in the suburbs, Mierzwa hadn’t had much contact with anyone he knew was gay. O’Banion’s changed that. “Yes, there are people there who obviously are gay,” Mierzwa says. “That wasn’t how we thought of them. They were just intelligent people that were fun to talk to—bias never had a chance to get started, at least in the crowd that I moved with in those places, because it was not why we were there. Orientation was just irrelevant.”

In the mid-1970s, Dem Hopkins paid around \$10,000 to buy a Rogers Park gay bar called the Greenleaf, where he was

ONE IS TO DISCO, AND ONE IS TO PUNK ROCK.”

—OZ OWNER DEM HOPKINS



already bartending. Hopkins also co-owned queer hiring agency Lend-a-Man, but because his business partner, Dick Nielsen, oversaw day-to-day operations, Hopkins could focus on the Greenleaf. That's not to say he always did, though—in the early days of 1978, he found another obsession. "I completely neglected the bar," he says. "Fortunately, I had a great staff, but I was living at La Mere."

Hopkins packed the Greenleaf's jukebox with glam and added Ramones and Sex Pistols records as he found them. "Our customers were overall pretty cool about it," he says. "Of course, we upset some—there was a divide in the community, because the majority of the bars and the majority of the queer community were in love with disco. It was my bar—I wasn't gonna go that route. It seemed like a perversion of everything about rock 'n' roll that I loved."

Hopkins ruffled more feathers when he ditched the Greenleaf's name for Oz, shortly after La Mere burned down. "I took a lot of criticism, a lot of heat, from places like *Gay Chicago Magazine*," he says. "I was getting some feedback that I was a traitor to the queer community." Most of the original gay clientele didn't abandon the bar, but Oz also attracted straight punks from the far north side who might not have ventured all the way down to River North for O'Banion's. Hopkins wanted it to be known as a place where anyone could hear punk, and he liked to tell newcomers to leave their hang-ups at the door.

Before it became Oz, the Greenleaf was the target of homophobic harassment frequently enough that Hopkins had to hire security. That stopped being an issue shortly after the bar became Oz—the punks were happy to fight back. "The fag bashers weren't quite sure what was going on there—they thought they were going to attack, and they got their asses kicked," Hopkins says. "People that had been nervous before, there was this sudden feeling of being emboldened."

As Hopkins tells it, Chicago police were largely indifferent when the Greenleaf was the target of abuse, but once the bar went punk, they took an unwelcome interest in it. During the Iran-Contra hostage crisis, Oz promoted a themed party with a satirical window display at the Wax Trax! record store in Lincoln Park—it included a banner that read "Free America, kill the hostages."

"It was maybe in poor taste, but we were not serious about killing the hostages," Hopkins says. "The police didn't see it that way, and had threatened to arrest me if the party went on. We had papier-mache hostages and people had

"ALL THE STRAIGHT DISCO BARS BACK THEN—THE MID-70S—WERE KIND OF RACIST. IF YOU REALLY WANTED TO PARTY, YOU HAD TO GO TO THE GAY BARS."

—KEN ELLIS, DOORMAN AT LA MERE VIPERE AND O'BANION'S

squirt guns. The cops busted us."

It wouldn't be the last time the cops made trouble for Hopkins and Oz.

O'Banion's began regularly hosting live music in 1979. "We didn't have a stage. People would come in and play on the floor," Rapchak says. "Eventually, we put a little platform in." Local bands such as Poison Squirrel, Immune System, and Clox were among the first to play.

Clancy had hired a man named Everett Rogers as O'Banion's general manager—Fox worked under him, and tried to keep the bar from falling apart. Clancy wasn't putting money into repairs, and Fox would spend entire weekends fixing up the dance floor. "It was OK, and then it was bearable, and then it became unbearable," he says.

One afternoon in early 1980, Fox was in the bar's basement trying to fix a leaky pipe, and it burst. "I saw rats and cockroaches scurrying and I just said, 'That's enough, I can't do this anymore.'" He shut off the water, called Rogers to quit, and locked up. Fox went to work at Lakeview rock club Tuts at its new location on Belmont.

At its Rogers Park location, Oz booked Canadian hardcore icons D.O.A. for their first Chicago show—which Hopkins believes was one of the city's first hardcore shows ever—in 1979. The bar could only hold about 120 people, which wasn't nearly enough. "There used to be an old walk-in cooler—we had torn the cooler out, and they could barely get on what we called the stage," says Hopkins. "It was mobbed. People out in front listening."

By early 1980, Oz had relocated to 112-14 W. Hubbard, replacing a River North gay bar called the Ranch; the move nearly tripled its capacity, and it ramped up its show schedule. Oz sat amid a throng of gay bars, and its new neighbors weren't all welcoming. "We were a total island there," Hopkins says. "Those queer bars down there were very unhappy—they wanted me shut down. I tell people it's because I think we wore leather better than their kids."

This incarnation of Oz is where Hopkins began showcasing many of the local punk bands that ended up on *Busted at Oz*—among them Naked Raygun, Strike Under, and Silver Abuse. Effigies guitarist Earl "Oil" Letiecq, who moved to Chicago in 1980, bonded with his new bandmates at Oz. "The very first time I ever went to Oz, I'm walking up to the front door on the sidewalk, and who comes walking out but Tom and Regina—they were two huge,



pride

huge drag queens,” Letiecq says. “Being from a small town in upstate New York, I wasn’t really exposed to much of that.” Chicago punk opened his eyes.

Oz moved to its third and final location, at 3714-1/2 N. Broadway in Lakeview, before the end of 1980. This Oz had no sign out front, but it did just fine on word of mouth. The bar could hold around 250 people, and a New Year’s Eve show with Naked Raygun, Strike Under, and the Effigies drew a bigger crowd than could fit inside. The place was run-down, but that was part of the charm. “It wasn’t exactly the Pump Room, but it was ours, thanks to Dem,” Meehan says. “It was a place we could go, that we could play, that we could do whatever you wanted.” Hopkins also kept Oz’s staff majority queer.

Hopkins didn’t initially have trouble with the police at the Broadway location, but he’s pretty sure they just weren’t yet aware he was there. “It was a struggle to get the liquor license, but I ran it for about three months before I got the liquor license, and we were actually doing OK,” he says. “I got the liquor license, they busted us the next day, because then they knew exactly who we were.”

Hopkins says he ended up in jail at least 20 times while running Oz. “There were times on Broadway, they’d hold me for 23 hours, release me—I only lived about five blocks from the station—and before I’d get home they’d arrest me again,” he says. He says he heard it from a cop on “pretty good authority” that Mayor Jane Byrne had taken advice from California police to sniff out any hardcore punk bars and shut them down.

In their short lives, O’Banion’s and Oz hosted some of the most important early U.S. punk bands. O’Banion’s booked Minor Threat, Hüsker Dü, and Dead Kennedys. When Hüsker Dü played Oz in late March 1981, they met Greg Ginn of Black Flag, who suggested they contact Minutemen bassist Mike Watt. The following year the New Alliance label, which Watt had founded with Minutemen guitarist D. Boon and a mutual friend, released Hüsker Dü’s debut, *Land Speed Record*.

The live recordings on *Busted at Oz* were made a couple weeks before that Hüsker Dü show. Naked Raygun, the Effigies, Silver Abuse, the Subverts, and Da performed at Oz over three nights (two bands played each night) to create a kind of snapshot of the local punk scene. “I could see that Oz would be coming to an end very soon, because of the police—I couldn’t miss that,” Hopkins says. “At the same time, I knew that we had something very

special going on with these bands. Never did I imagine that people would still be talking about them all this time later.”

Within three months, Oz was closed.

Rapchak had taken over as manager of O’Banion’s by the time it closed in early 1982; beloved bartender Roseann Kuberski helped her run the place. “Everyone looked at me really strange after I became the manager,” Rapchak says.

The demise of O’Banion’s was accelerated when Fox, its former manager, helped open Old Town punk bar Exit in 1981 (its initial location was at 1653 N. Wells, and it still operates at 1315 W. North). Exit was close enough to O’Banion’s to draw away a lot of its customers, and it wasn’t falling apart. Letiecq remembers that the Effigies were asked to play a fundraiser to help keep O’Banion’s open. “We said, ‘No, we’re not going to play, because it’s still going to close,’” he says.

“They wrote a song to me about O’Banion’s, how I was trying to keep it alive,” Rapchak says. In a live recording from a 1983 set at Paycheck’s Lounge in Hamtramck, Michigan, you can hear Effigies front man John Kezdy introduce that song, titled “Rather See None.” “This one’s about certain Chicago bars,” he says, “and the people that try to save them.”

In 1996, Ukrainian Village bar Club Foot began hosting annual O’Banion’s reunions. Rapchak had moved to New York City after O’Banion’s closed, but came back for a reunion and ran into Kezdy. “He told me that he didn’t think I would ever get the credit that I deserved,” she says. “I thought that was the nicest thing anyone could say to me.”

The shuttering of O’Banion’s wasn’t the blow it might have been, because at that point the punk scene had spread beyond just a few bars. Hardcore had begun its rise, and some of the original players from La Mere had moved on from punk. Ramel-Hoeksema had published the final *Gabba Gabba Gazette* in 1979, in part because mainstream publications had started picking up on punk. Other local zines followed in the *Gabba Gabba Gazette*’s wake, including *Cooldest Retard*, to which Mierzwa contributed. “There really was no need for it,” Ramel-Hoeksema says. “I guess I never thought about it, but we served a need.”

Some of the La Mere crew moved on to Neo, which opened in July 1979 as a new-wave bar and hired Boudreau to manage. Ellis worked there too, and Rivers sometimes DJed, though he was getting burned out. “I would get in trou-

ble, ’cause I would play things that some people didn’t like,” Rivers says. He remembers deliberately annoying dancers with “Ska Wars,” a 12-inch ska cover of the *Star Wars* theme. “I had too much of a sense of humor,” he says.

Fox, who’d hired Letiecq to tend bar at Exit, moved on after a few years to Metro and Smart Bar, which Shanahan had opened in 1982. “Between La Mere and the Warehouse—that’s the incubator for Smart Bar,” Shanahan says.

After the fire at La Mere, Rapchak broke into the burned-out building and took some keepsakes, including a few melted bottles. But she eventually disposed of most of them. “I was like, ‘Why do I have these?’ They were like an altar to La Mere,” she says. She’s still got one of the bar’s leopard-print bar stools, though it’s split down the middle. “I’ve had it forever,” she says. “I’ve moved it with me for years.”

In 1980, Skafish’s band issued its self-titled debut through I.R.S. Records, a division of A&M. He wasn’t the only La Mere alumnus to break into the majors: In 1981, Lynch became one of the first employees at New York hip-hop label Tommy Boy, which partnered with Warner Brothers in 1985. (She eventually worked her way up to president, managing the likes of Queen Latifah and De La Soul.) Though Skafish didn’t abandon the Chicago punk scene when La Mere Vipere burned—his band went on to play O’Banion’s and Exit—he never stopped missing that club’s special magic. “I don’t think that there was ever gonna be any re-creating what happened at La Mere in terms of its club level,” he says. “The scene changed, the vibe changed.”

As hardcore overtook punk in the 80s, it brought a crowd with a much higher tolerance for atavistic displays of tough-guy machismo. By the middle of the decade, violence, homophobia, and misogyny had overrun the scene. It became harder and harder to find signs of the anything-goes queer culture that had made La Mere such a great incubator for Chicago punk.

“When that ended, it wasn’t gonna be re-created—that crowd, the misfit crowd, the gay crowd, the transgender crowd, the ‘we don’t know who we are’ crowd, migrated into those other clubs, but that energy became dissipated as the years went on,” Skafish says. “At a certain point, as punk evolved in Chicago, it wasn’t celebrating the kind of things that were being celebrated in the beginning.”

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Astral Spirits

icepicktrio.bandcamp.com/album/hellraiser

SUN RA MAY HAVE told everyone he was from Saturn, but the Afrofuturistic avant-gardist spent the 1950s in Chicago. While he was here, he recorded “El Is a Sound of Joy,” jazz’s greatest tribute to the city’s public transport system. No one in improvising trio Icepick—bassist Ingebrigt Håker Flaten, trumpeter Nate Wooley, and drummer Chris Corsano—now lives in Chicago (Håker Flaten spent a few years here in the aughts), but in 2018 the group came to town to play a benefit for Experimental Sound Studio’s Option Series, a weekly concert and salon launched in 2015 that served as a beacon for improvisers around the world until COVID-19 closed everything down. *Hellraiser*, the trio’s splendid third album, was recorded at that gig, which took place at Fulton Street Collective, a near-west-side loft space where it’s possible to hear the Green Line trains when the music goes quiet. So it’s only fitting that two of the LP’s three tracks (“El-Bound” and “Blueline”) are titled in homage to the CTA’s elevated train system. The collective experience of Icepick’s members encompasses a myriad of improvisational possibilities, and their technical acumen allows them to tackle tradition-steeped swing as easily as post-everything noise, but they keep their focus on evolving sonic narratives that resolve each knotty exchange or coarse textural exploration with a nakedly emotional tune. —**BILL MEYER**

BLU & EXILE, *MILES: FROM AN INTERLUDE CALLED LIFE*

Dirty Science

bluandexile.bandcamp.com/album/miles

Since 2007, Los Angeles rapper Blu has dispensed more than a dozen albums indebted to hip-hop’s golden age, and on his releases with producer Exile, his garrulous style finds a firm footing. The duo’s third effort, the double disc *Miles: From an Interlude Called Life* (Dirty Science), spans the globe and the history of the African diaspora. The nine-minute epic “Roots of Blu” tells the story of humanity through the accomplishments of Black folks, name-checking the likes of Tutankhamun, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Sun Ra; meanwhile, the rangy narrative of “Blue as I Can Be” spins listeners through Blu’s Los Angeles childhood. His expression of creativity, determination, and lyrical munificence is deeply personal, but he also dissects life on the road and the complexities of navigating the music industry with the day-in-the-life vantage point of “Miles Away.” What isn’t expressly addressed is that following the critical embrace of Blu & Exile’s debut, 2007’s *Below the Heavens*, Blu made *No York!* under his own name—it leaked in 2011, while he was under contract to Warner Brothers, and within weeks that major-label deal was over. (The album got a formal release through Blu’s own New World Color label in 2013, and was later retitled *York!*) That album seemed to strike out for purposely different territory than the MC’s soulful work with Exile: Blu’s vocals float over relatively electro-related productions that, while not exactly anti-commercial, might’ve been a bit jarring to traditionalists. Whatever the significance of his ill-fated dalliance with Warner Brothers, Blu retains his ability to transform personal insights into ambitious narrative projects—*Miles* is the most expansive and all-encompassing exploration of his life thus far. This probably means we can expect him to unfurl a few more novel-like albums before this serialization is complete. —**DAVE CANTOR**

DRAB CITY, *GOOD SONGS FOR BAD PEOPLE*

Bella Union

drabcity.bandcamp.com/album/good-songs-for-bad-people

To some Chicagoans, “Drab City” might sound like the name of a pickup band that plays melancholy covers of Will Oldham and Joanna Newsom tunes, but it’s actually a Berlin duo that specializes in an understated, lo-fi combo of cinematic trip-hop and folksy dream pop, flavored with a little jazz and some fuzzy samples. Multi-instrumentalists and producers Chris Dexter Greenspan (who helped pioneer witch house as oOoO) and Asia (who performs as Islamiq Grrrls) hatched Drab City after joining forces on a 2018 collaborative album under their stage names; that record, *Famine Mystique*, is eclectic enough to incorporate 80s metal-ballad guitar and Auto-Tuned vocals from one track to the next without seeming incoherent. The artists carry this taste for variety over to *Good Songs for Bad People*, their first album as Drab City, and from its first moments it’s clear they want us to immerse ourselves in their sepia-tone world rather than peek in from outside—instrumental opener “Entrance to Drab City” plays like a warped record unearthed in

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MUSIC



F.A.B.L.E. © DENIS THOMPSON

a dusty attic. That exploratory tone defines much of the record, whether the tracks lace their charming pop melodies with smoky keys and twangy guitar (“Hand on My Pocket”) or feel like they could fall apart at the seams (“Devil Doll”). Though heart-break and despair are familiar bedfellows in Drab City’s lair—the synth-driven “Standing Where You Left Me” could be a B side to one of Martin Gore’s more yearning songs—there’s some scrappy resilience too. Greenspan’s vocals give a laid-back stoner vibe to “Live Free and Die When It’s Cool,” which dovetails with the tune’s grooving, psychedelic interlude to give it an uplifting feel—despite its bleak lyrics about alienation and struggle after migrating to a new city. —JAMIE LUDWIG

F.A.B.L.E., (IX) *THE HERMIT*

Storybook
storybookfable.bandcamp.com/releases

Englewood multi-instrumentalist, engineer, and rapper Christopher Horace started releasing solo recordings a little more than two years ago. He released his first mixtape, February 2018’s *Exodus*, under the name Nephset, but since then he’s been performing and recording as F.A.B.L.E., which stands for Finally a Black Life Explained. For a year or so now, Horace has been working on a full-length tentatively titled *Duckweed*, but he’s grown so frustrated with his own process that he decided to compile seven of its songs and release them via his own Storybook Records as (IX) *The Hermit*. (He still plans to finish *Duckweed* eventually.) Whatever causes the underlying friction that’s stalled *Duckweed*, it’s imperceptible on the cool, in-the-pocket hip-hop on (IX) *The Hermit*. Horace’s rambunctious inflections impart a youthful swagger to the EP’s slender horns, billowy keys, and relaxed percussion, and he’s so comfortable on the mike that he can make his wordiest verses go down smoothly. When he raps about his artistic individuality on the summery “Boogie Board,” he makes the better half of his point with his commanding presence. He’s far

from the only Chicagoan to make uplifting hip-hop filled with introspective lyrics about his neighborhood, Black life, and community, but his jubilation, his open-book warmth, and his expressive fervor help him stand out. Horace originally released (IX) *The Hermit* in April, and in May he made it available on Bandcamp as well—all proceeds from sales through that platform benefit the George Floyd Memorial Fund. —LEOR GALIL

HEATHEN BEAST, *THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE TELEVISED BUT IT WILL BE HEARD*
 Self-released
heathenbeast.bandcamp.com/album/the-revolution-will-not-be-televised-but-it-will-be-heard

Kolkata blackened death-metal band Heathen Beast are atheist, antifascist, and pointedly anonymous, and their self-released album *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised but It Will Be Heard* is 35 minutes of vitriol aimed at the anti-Muslim bigotry of India’s prime minister, Narendra Modi, and the Indian government’s turn toward authoritarianism and hate. The song titles are direct, pithy, and profane: “Fuck Modi-Shah,” “Fuck Your Police Brutality,” “Fuck the Economy (Modi Already Has),” and “Fuck the B.J.P.,” which takes aim at India’s current ruling faction, the Bharatiya Janata Party. For those not familiar with current Indian political issues, clips of news announcements provide brief context about anti-Muslim citizenship laws and sexual-assault allegations against religious gurus. Carvaka (vocals, guitars), Samkhya (bass), and Mimamsa (drums) don’t write complex or varied tunes, and their lyrics can come across as a bit schematically dry, when they’re intelligible at all (“Humanity suffers for your hate / Religious disharmony you create / Exploit the poor for your gains / Your powerful friends have their way”). But Heathen Beast have a gift for channeling rage into pounding, anthemic assaults that beg for headbanging—they scrape away layers of flesh, viscera, and bone to reveal a pulsing mass

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oldtownschool.org



MUSIC



Longshot ANDREW DOENCH

continued from 37

of adrenaline and righteous anger. The revolution can definitely be heard, and even from a couple of continents away, it will make your ears bleed for justice. —NOAH BERLATSKY

LONGSHOT, I'M SAYING

SureShot Productions

mclongshot.bandcamp.com/album/imsaying

In a recent interview with Minnesota Public Radio host Andrea Swensson, rapper Chad Heslup (aka Longshot) talked about his history of involvement in protest movements since moving from Chicago to Minneapolis 11 years ago. He was inspired to join his first march after Minneapolis police shot and killed 24-year-old Jamar Clark in November 2015, and he returned to the streets to protest the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis officer Derek Chauvin on May 25. "My energy felt like I wanted to be up front with this," Heslup told Swensson. The spirit that got him marching also drives his efforts on the mike throughout the new *I'm Saying* (SureShot Productions). Floyd's death catalyzed Heslup's ruminations about police brutality, the racial stratification of society, and Black life and death in the U.S., and he's pledged to donate proceeds from Bandcamp sales of *I'm Saying* to Chicago and Minneapolis organizations dedicated to ending police brutality and social injustice. Heslup hates being forced to live in a country that prioritizes financial rewards over the lives of its Black citizens, and on the grimy, dramatic "P.O.P. (Profit Over People)," that grief and anger are palpable even in his quietest bars. —LEOR GALIL

RUN THE JEWELS, RTJ4

RBC/BMG

runthejewels.com

The fourth Run the Jewels full-length, *RTJ4*, is the hardcore rap duo's first since Donald Trump's inauguration. Not at all by coincidence, it's also the most sociopolitically outspoken album they've released to date. On their third, released at the end of 2016, rapper-activist Killer Mike and rapper-producer El-P let poignant, sober lyrics about war, religion, love, and redemption shine through the cracks in their armor of car-bombing braggadocio. Their fuck-the-power attitude and rap-battle instincts also inform *RTJ4*, which features plenty of the group's characteristic mix of John Carpenteresque synth sounds, boom-bap beats, and trap rhythms. The album unflinchingly addresses the societal ills dominating the zeitgeist of 2020, and it feels especially prescient given the nationwide protests against racist police brutality that had started by the time of its release. "Walking in the Snow" begins by addressing the Trump administration's child-separation policy: "Pseudo-Christians, y'all indifferent?" raps El-P. "Kids in prisons ain't a sin? Shit / If even one scrap o' what Jesus taught connected / You'd feel different." Killer Mike then references the tragic killing of Eric Garner and similar cases of police brutality, and sadly foreshadows the murder of George Floyd by law enforcement: "And everyday on the evening news, they feed you fear for free / And you so numb you watch the cops choke out a man like me / Until my voice goes from a shriek to a whisper, 'I can't breathe.'" On "JU\$t," the most trap-inspired track on the album, guests Pharrell Williams and Zack de la Rocha take turns telling us to "look at all these slave masters posin'



Wire © GIULIANA COVELLA

on your dollar" before El-P makes his own allusion to Garner: "The X on the map where the pain keep hitting / Just us ducks here sitting / Where murderous choke-hold cops still earnin' a living." Other tracks talk about murdered oligarchs, unions for sex workers, and media-manufactured propaganda. Even the video for "Ooh La La," one of the biggest bangers on *RTJ4*, depicts the end of capitalism, with people dancing and burning money in the streets. What began as two new friends making fun, cocky rap tracks that bridged El-P's old-school east-coast roots and Killer Mike's southern style has grown and matured over four albums. The duo still drops lines about being "cool as penguin pussy on the polar-cap peninsula," but these days even their most violent fantasies and most boastful we're-the-shit swagger reflect a deeper understanding of the human condition. *RTJ4* also touches on issues of the heart and soul, with recurring themes of gratitude, personal growth, self-medication, and being broken down by the world's evils. On "Pulling the Pin," special guest Mavis Staples sings the most heart-wrenching refrain on the album: "There's a grenade in my heart / And the pin is in their palm." The album is an unflinching criticism of the world, packaged in hilarious chest-thumping bombast, dystopian synth sounds, and head-banging beats. Run the Jewels might not be soothsayers, but *RTJ4* will go down as a defining soundtrack of 2020. —SCOTT MORROW

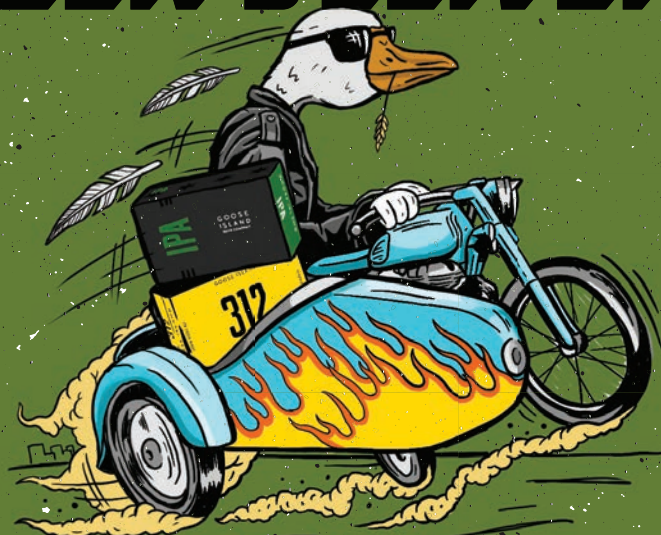
WIRE, 10:20

Pink Flag
pinkflag.greedbag.com/buy/kruic

Before I first press play on an "aging punks still at

it" record, I try to prepare myself for the worst. Whether the band in question have retained only one original member in a completely retooled lineup (like present-day Gang of Four), or replaced their figurehead (like the Misfits did in the 90s), or awkwardly embraced current musical trends (remember Iggy Pop's 2003 collaboration with Sum 41?), or pivoted to whatever the fuck "Black Flag" were doing on 2013's aptly titled *What The . . .*, the odds of disappointment are high. But I guess I should've given experimental postpunk pioneers Wire more credit: their recent 17th album, *Mind Hive*, can easily sit alongside their best. The London band formed in 1976 and initially split in 1980, but they've operated on and off since they first came back together in 1985. Today, their lineup still features three of the four original members. Perhaps it's due to the amount of genuine Wire DNA at work that *Mind Hive* has everything you'd want in a Wire record: terse rhythms, robotic vocals, alien melodies, and angular guitar interplay from the band that invented it. "Cactusd" sounds like it was pulled off *Chairs Missing*, while "Off the Beach," the new record's poppiest song, would be right at home on *154*. This month Wire dropped their second record of the year, an odds 'n' sods collection called 10:20. This delayed Record Store Day release consists of previously unissued material they've accumulated over the past decade—half its tracks are outtakes from 2010's *Red Barked Tree*, while the other half are from the *Mind Hive* sessions. With songs built on motorik Krautrock as well as the band's signature dreamy postpunk, 10:20 demonstrates how modern-era Wire have managed to stay fresh while honoring their roots. Talk about aging gracefully—they're doing it right, and really, none of us should be surprised. —LUCA CIMARUSTI

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#CHIMUSIC35

Damon Locks's greatest moment in Chicago music history

The founder of the Black Monument Ensemble still feels the ripples from *Soul Train* 50 years after its Chicago premiere.

By **DAMON LOCKS AND AYANA CONTRERAS**

Not only is 2020 the Year of Chicago Music, it's also the 35th year for the nonprofit Arts & Business Council of Chicago (A&BC), which provides business expertise and training to creatives and their organizations citywide. To celebrate, the A&BC has launched the #ChiMusic35 campaign at

ChiMusic35.com, which includes a public poll to determine the consensus 35 greatest moments in Chicago music history as well as a raffle to benefit the A&BC's work supporting creative communities struggling with the impact of COVID-19 in the city's disinvested neighborhoods.

SEBASTIÁN HIDALGO

Another part of the campaign is this *Reader* collaboration: a series spotlighting important figures in Chicago music serving as #ChiMusic35 ambassadors. This week, we hear from visual artist, educator, and musician Damon Locks. Locks was a founding member of influential Chicago posthardcore band Trenchmouth, which split in 1996, and he still fronts the Eternals (where he plays alongside former Trenchmouth bandmate Wayne Montana). He's been a vocalist with Exploding Star Orchestra, one of many hard-to-categorize groups led by cornetist and composer Rob Mazurek, and his latest album, 2019's *Where Future Unfolds*, features a similarly ambitious group that he leads himself, the Black Monument Ensemble.

This interview was conducted by Ayana Contreras, who's a DJ, a host and producer at WBEZ radio, and a columnist for *DownBeat* magazine.

Ayana Contreras: What's your favorite Chicago music moment?

Damon Locks: The experiences in my list of [moments] were things that caused ripples that went on forever. So I'm not talking about when I saw Fred Anderson take apart Peter Brötzmann at the Empty Bottle, which was great. I'm talking about the emergence of *Soul Train* [which premiered in Chicago in 1970]. Even in Maryland, where I was from, we felt the effects of *Soul Train* when it expanded and became a nationwide show.

So I'm going to dig a little deeper with you. You said that you felt the ripples of *Soul Train*. Tell me about a way in which you felt those ripples.

Soul Train was kind of a beacon for fashion, movement, and culture. Every weekend, you would stand in front of the TV as a little kid and just watch it. You remember those giant TVs that were super huge? We'd stand in front of that TV and we would do the double bump or whatever. [It] was a way of finding out about new music. We'd practice the dance moves. You'd look at the costumes.

That was something that expressed a contemporary Black culture, but also was so affirming and representational. Every week you could turn on the television and there would be something that was expressing

Black culture in this vibrant, Technicolor, surround-sound way.

Speaking of Chicago, what ultimately drew you here?

I was in New York, and I went to the School of Visual Arts. I was an illustration major. And at the time I wasn't that happy in New York. It wasn't what my imagination said it was going to be. There was a woman that I was interested in that came out to the Art Institute of Chicago, and I came to visit the Art Institute and I saw a whole school full of weirdos. And it was different than being in New York. It wasn't organized.

So I was really attracted to that collection of weirdos, and I decided to come out here. Illinois was not a place that I thought I would go to. But once I got here, the experience of being able to make something without a lot of the baggage of New York seemed like a possibility. You could make connections and create something that wasn't finished, in a way.

Yeah. I agree. Chicago is a place where you can will something into being while working through it if it's got a few scraggly ends. So that leads me into my second question. What do you think it is about Chicago's music and cultural scene that has made it so influential internationally?

I feel like in many ways, Chicago... they don't keep their doors shut to you. If you're putting in work, and if you ask for help, someone's going to be like, "I have some resources. Why don't you use these?" That has always been the case in Chicago for me. And I feel that musically, I feel that in the arts, I feel that on a bunch of different levels. 

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GOSSIP WOLF

A furry ear to the ground of the local music scene

THIS WEEKEND, Humboldt Park event space **Reunion Chicago** partners with queer party collective **Slo 'Mo** and Web TV platform **Open Television** for the three-night virtual Pride festival **#4theCulture**. Reunion founders **Elijah McKinnon** (who cofounded OTV and just won a Leaders for a New Chicago grant from the Field Foundation) and **Kristen Kaza** (who cofounded Slo 'Mo and collaborates with the Reader) have put together an intersectional, intergenerational lineup that centers Black LGBTQ+ artists and their communities. OTV hosts the free event Friday through Sunday, June 26 through 28, with performances from many great Chicago acts, including **Drea the Vibe Dealer**, **Lucy Stooie**, **Avery R. Young**, **Mother Nature**, **DJ Duane Powell**, and **Thair**. Tune in to OTV to see who's on each night!

TV Pow cofounder **Brent Gutzeit** moved from Chicago to Milwaukee four years ago, but he hung onto the Rolodex of talented friends he built here. In less than a week he assembled the 106-track, 11-hour compilation **Building a Better Reality**, released on Juneteenth to benefit **Black Lives Matter**, the **NAACP Legal Defense Fund**, and the **Greater Chicago Food Depository**. "This is just something that I could do," Gutzeit says. "We all can help out in different ways—figure it out and do it." Artists donated live tracks, unissued material, and new recordings. Among the contributors are **Ken Vandermark**, **I Kong Kult**, **Al Margolis**, **Azita Youssefi**, **Fire-Toolz**, **Fred Lonberg-Holm**, **Gel Set**, and **Nick Mazzarella & Tomeka Reid**, and standout cuts include a breathtaking 30-minute piece by **Joshua Abrams** and a live **Michael Zerang** track that conjures a cloud of unsettling sounds.

In February, Chicago rapper **Roy Kinsey** dropped one of the year's best albums, *Kinsey: A Memoir*. Last weekend he teased a new song, a remix of the 2019 single **"She/Her"** with an all-star cast of Chicago women: **Mother Nature**, **Cali Hendrix**, and **Tweak G.** —**J.R. NELSON AND LEOR GALIL**

Got a tip? Tweet @Gossip_Wolf or e-mail gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com.

WOLF BY KEITH HERZIK

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NEW

Anteloper 7/1, 9 PM, livestream at hideoutchicago.online

Chris Barron 7/2, 3:30 PM, livestream at stageit.com

Beach Slang 7/11, 4 PM, livestream at stageit.com

Big Hearts for Big Kids featuring Tenille Townes, Dierks Bentley, Brandi Carlile, Luke Combs, Andy Grammer, Mickey Guyton, Caylee Hammack, Ashley McBryde, Lori McKenna, Chrissy Metz, John Osborne, Lucie Silvas 6/30, 7 PM, livestream at facebook.com/tenilletownes

Andrew Bird 6/28, 7 PM, livestream at go.seated.com/events

Bluesday Tuesday featuring Cash Box Kings 7/7, 7 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn

Bounce and Break Yo Back 3 featuring Thank You Chicago DJs 9/5, 10 PM, the Promontory

Dollyrots 6/28, 3 PM, livestream at stageit.com/the-dollyrots

Drama 7/9, 9 PM; 7/23, 9 PM, Livestream at drama.veeps.com/stream/schedule

Duo Diorama 6/28, 3 PM, livestream information at utf.org

Ensemble Evolution, International Contemporary Ensemble 7/2, 6 PM, livestream at youtube.com/international-contemporaryensemble

Etc Radio featuring DJ Payam Parvizi, DJ Salar Ansari 7/17, 10 PM, livestream at twitch.tv/groove_cafe

Fea 7/9, 9 PM, livestream at stageit.com

#4theCulture Fest Virtual Pride Celebration featuring Darling Shear, Avery R. Young, Mother Nature, Lucy

Stooie, Tribble, DeWayne Perkins, Thee David Davis, Ashley Ray, Thair, Tasha, Bambi Banks-Coulee, Mister Wallace, Sasha Love, KC Ortiz, DJ Audio Jack, DJ Selah Say, and more 6/26-6/28, 7 PM, livestream at 4theculture.com

Girl Talk 5/4/2021, 8 PM, Metro, 18+

Laine Hardy 6/25, 7:30 PM; 7/9, 7:30 PM, livestream at lainehardy.bubbleup.live

Hotel California 8/9, 7 PM, Arcadia Theatre, Saint Charles

Natalie A. Ingram 7/26, 3 PM, livestream at facebook.com/natalieaingrammusic

Larkin Poe 6/27, 3 PM, livestream at fans.com

Ramsey Lewis 6/27, 1 PM, livestream at stageit.com

Lost Souls of Saturn 6/25, 5 PM, livestream at mocado-troit.org

LP's Happy Hour featuring Jon Langford, Sima Cunningham 6/26, 5 PM, livestream at hideoutchicago.online

Metal Monday with DJ Eleven 7/6, 9 PM; 7/13, 9 PM; 7/20, 9 PM, livestream at periscope.tv/ChgLateBar

Molly Hatchet, LynSkynyrd 8/2, 7 PM, Arcadia Theatre, Saint Charles

Monsta X 7/25, 10 PM, livestream at livexlive.com, on sale Fri 6/26, 7 AM

National Tap Day, Chicago Style 11/29, 7:30 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music

Old Town School of Folk Music's Virtual Pride Jam featuring Andrea Bunch & Julia Storke 6/26, 6 PM, livestream at ots.fm/pride

Option series presents Joanna Mattrey 7/13, 8 PM, livestream at ess.org/the-quarantine-concerts

Puddles Pity Party 6/27, 4:30 PM; 7/11, 4:30 PM; 7/25, 4:30 PM, livestream at puddlespityparty.veeps.com/stream/schedule

Rico 7/3, 7 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn

Riot Fest 2021 featuring My Chemical Romance, Smashing Pumpkins, Run the Jewels, Pixies, Coheed and Cambria, Taking Back Sunday, Sublime With Rome, Dirty Heads, Lupe Fiasco, Vic Mensa, All-American Rejects, New Found Glory, Circle Jerks, L7, and more 9/16/2021-9/19/2021, Douglas Park

Roots Picnic Virtual Experience featuring H.E.R., Lil Baby, Roddy Ricch, SZA, Kirk Franklin, Snoh Aalegra, D-Nice, Polo G, G Herbo, Musiq Soulchild, Earthgang, and more 6/27, 5 PM, livestream at rootspicnic.com/philly

Scientific Map 7/10, 7 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn

Ron Vincent 8/20, 7:30 PM, Arcadia Theatre, Saint Charles

Voices: a Benefit Concert for Chicago Artists featuring Taylor Mallory and more 7/5, 6 PM, livestream at facebook.com/rattlebackrecords

Ricky Warwick 7/11, 3 PM, livestream at stageit.com/ricky_warwick

Random Rab, Canter 8/13, 9 PM, Sleeping Village, canceled

Riot Fest 2020 9/11-9/13, Douglas Park, postponed until 2021

Johnny Rivera & Caribe Project Orchestra, DJ Carlos Guate 11/7, 10:30 PM, Joe's Live, Rosemont, rescheduled

Johnny Rivers 8/23, 7 PM, Arcadia Theatre, Saint Charles, postponed until a date to be determined

Sheer Mag, Young Guv 8/15, 10 PM, Empty Bottle, canceled

Two Feet 5/25/2021, 9 PM, Metro, rescheduled; tickets purchased for original date will be honored, 18+

Widespread Panic 4/1/2021-

Antibalas 9/17, 9 PM, Sleeping Village

Black Pumas, Seratones 8/27, 9 PM, House of Blues, 17+

Batu, Hijo Prodigio 10/2, 10 PM, Smart Bar

Beach Fossils, Wild Nothing 12/6-12/7, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Budos Band 9/5, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Chosen Few Virtual In-House Picnic & Festival 7/4, livestream at chosenfewdjs.com

Cimafunk 9/6, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Clannad 9/15, 8 PM, Irish American Heritage Center, 17+

Damien Escobar 11/7, 6 and 9 PM, City Winery

Melissa Etheridge 9/26, 7:30 PM, Genesee Theatre, Waukegan

Flesh Panthers, Bobby Lees 8/7, 10 PM, Schubas, 18+

Flor de Toloache 11/12, 9 PM, Sleeping Village

Terisa Griffin 9/11, 8 PM, the Promontory

King Gizzard & the Lizard Wizard, Leah Senior 10/29, 7 PM, Radius Chicago, 17+

La Roux 11/17, 7:30 PM, Park West

Little Big Town 10/22-10/23, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre

Liturgy, Leya, Anatomy of Habit 8/21, 10 PM, Empty Bottle

San Fermin 6/4/2021, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music

Gilberto Santa Rosa 9/19, 8 PM, Copernicus Center

Teskey Brothers, Joshy Soul 10/11, 8 PM, the Vic, 17+

Wavves, Juiceboxxx 11/5, 7 PM, Schubas, 18+

Wavves, Sadgirl 11/5, 10 PM, Schubas, 18+

Waxahatchee 6/29, 8 PM; 7/6, 8 PM, livestream at noonchorus.com/waxahatchee

Bob Weir & Wolf Bros 10/20, 7 PM, Chicago Theatre

Wingtips, Panic Priest, None of Your Concern 10/9, 9:30 PM, Sleeping Village

Winnetka Bowling League 10/3, 8 PM, Subterranean

EARLY WARNINGS

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4/3/2021, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre, rescheduled; tickets purchased for previously scheduled dates will be honored A

UPCOMING

Antibalas 9/17, 9 PM, Sleeping Village

Black Pumas, Seratones 8/27, 9 PM, House of Blues, 17+

Batu, Hijo Prodigio 10/2, 10 PM, Smart Bar

Beach Fossils, Wild Nothing 12/6-12/7, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Budos Band 9/5, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Chosen Few Virtual In-House Picnic & Festival 7/4, livestream at chosenfewdjs.com

Cimafunk 9/6, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Clannad 9/15, 8 PM, Irish American Heritage Center, 17+

Damien Escobar 11/7, 6 and 9 PM, City Winery

Melissa Etheridge 9/26, 7:30 PM, Genesee Theatre, Waukegan

Flesh Panthers, Bobby Lees 8/7, 10 PM, Schubas, 18+

Flor de Toloache 11/12, 9 PM, Sleeping Village

Terisa Griffin 9/11, 8 PM, the Promontory

King Gizzard & the Lizard Wizard, Leah Senior 10/29, 7 PM, Radius Chicago, 17+

La Roux 11/17, 7:30 PM, Park West

Little Big Town 10/22-10/23, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre

Liturgy, Leya, Anatomy of Habit 8/21, 10 PM, Empty Bottle

San Fermin 6/4/2021, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music

Gilberto Santa Rosa 9/19, 8 PM, Copernicus Center

Teskey Brothers, Joshy Soul 10/11, 8 PM, the Vic, 17+

Wavves, Juiceboxxx 11/5, 7 PM, Schubas, 18+

Wavves, Sadgirl 11/5, 10 PM, Schubas, 18+

Waxahatchee 6/29, 8 PM; 7/6, 8 PM, livestream at noonchorus.com/waxahatchee

Bob Weir & Wolf Bros 10/20, 7 PM, Chicago Theatre

Wingtips, Panic Priest, None of Your Concern 10/9, 9:30 PM, Sleeping Village

Winnetka Bowling League 10/3, 8 PM, Subterranean

Antibalas 9/17, 9 PM, Sleeping Village

Black Pumas, Seratones 8/27, 9 PM, House of Blues, 17+

Batu, Hijo Prodigio 10/2, 10 PM, Smart Bar

Beach Fossils, Wild Nothing 12/6-12/7, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Budos Band 9/5, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Chosen Few Virtual In-House Picnic & Festival 7/4, livestream at chosenfewdjs.com

Cimafunk 9/6, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

BREAKING NEWS...

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

Men's Virility Restored in Clinical Trial; 275% More Blood Flow in 5 Minutes

A newly improved version of America's best-selling male performance enhancer gives 70-year-old men the bedroom performance they enjoyed in their 30's.

America's best-selling sexual performance enhancer just got a lot better.

It's the latest breakthrough for nitric oxide – the molecule that makes erections possible by increasing blood flow to your penis.

Nitric oxide won the Nobel Prize in 1998. It's why "the little blue pill" works. More than 200,000 studies confirm it's the key to superior sexual performance.

And this new discovery increases nitric oxide availability resulting in even quicker, stronger and longer-lasting erections.

One double-blind, placebo-controlled study (the "gold-standard" of research) involved a group of 70-year-old-men.

They didn't exercise. They didn't eat healthy. And researchers reported their "nitric oxide availability was almost totally compromised," resulting in blood flow less than HALF of a man in peak sexual health.

But only five minutes after the first dose their blood flow increased 275%, back to levels of a perfectly healthy 31-year-old man! "It's amazing," remarks nitric oxide expert Dr. Al Sears. "That's like giving 70-year-old men the sexual power of 30-year-olds."

WHY SO MUCH EXCITEMENT?

Despite the billions men spend annually on older nitric oxide therapies, there's one well-known problem with them.

They don't always work.

Dr. Joseph Loscalzo explains why. He's studied nitric oxide for over 43 years. He is the physician-in-chief at Brigham and Women's Hospital. He says a "deficiency of bioactive nitric oxide... leads to impaired endothelium-dependent vasorelaxation."

In plain English, these older products may increase levels of nitric oxide. But that's only half the battle. If it's not bioactively available then your body can't absorb it to produce an erection.

Experts simply call it the nitric oxide "glitch." And until now, there's never been a solution.

NEXT GENERATION NITRIC OXIDE FORMULA FLYING OFF SHELVES

Upon further research, America's No. 1 men's health expert Dr. Al Sears discovered certain nutrients fix this "glitch" resulting in 275% better blood flow.

He's combined those nutrients with proven nitric oxide boosters in a new formula called *Primal Max Red*. In clinical

trials, 5,000 mg is required for satisfying sexual performance. *Primal Max Red* contains a bigger, 9,000 mg per serving dose. It's become so popular, he's having trouble keeping it in stock.

Dr. Sears is the author of more than 500 scientific papers. Thousands of people listened to him speak at the recent Palm Beach Health & Wellness Festival featuring Dr. Oz. NFL Hall of Fame quarterback Joe Namath recently visited his clinic, the **Sears Institute for Anti-Aging Medicine**.

Primal Max Red has only been available for a few months — but everyone who takes it reports a big difference. "I have the energy to have sex three times in one day, WOW! That has not happened in years. Oh, by the way I am 62," says Jonathan K. from Birmingham, AL.

HOW IT WORKS

Loss of erection power starts with your blood vessels. Specifically, the inside layer called the endothelium where nitric oxide is made.

The problem is various factors THICKEN your blood vessels as you age. This blocks availability causing the nitric oxide "glitch." The result is difficulty in getting and sustaining a healthy erection.

How bad is the problem?

Researcher shows the typical 40-year-old man absorbs 50% less nitric oxide. At 50, that drops to 25%. And once you pass 60 just a measly 15% gets through.

To make matters worse, nitric oxide levels start declining in your 30's. And by 70, nitric oxide production is down an alarming 75%.

Primal Max Red is the first formula to tackle both problems. Combining powerful nitric oxide boosters and a proven delivery mechanism that defeats the nitric oxide "glitch" resulting in 275% better blood flow and stronger erections. There's not enough space here to fully explain how it works, so Dr. Sears will send anyone who orders *Primal Max Red* a free special report that explains everything.

MORE CLINICAL RESULTS

Nutrients in *Primal Max Red* have logged impressive results.

In a *Journal of Applied Physiology* study, one resulted in a 30 times MORE nitric oxide. And these increased levels lasted up to 12 hours.

"I measured my nitric oxide levels, you can buy a test kit from Amazon," reports 48-year-old Jeff O. "Monday night I showed depleted."



A new discovery that increases nitric oxide availability was recently proven in a clinical trial to boost blood flow 275% resulting in even quicker, stronger and longer-lasting erections.

Then he used ingredients in *Primal Max Red* and, "The results were off the charts. I first woke around 3 a.m. on Tuesday with a throbbing boner. My nitric oxide levels measured at the top end of the range."

FREE BONUS TESTOSTERONE BOOSTER

Every order also gets Dr. Sears testosterone boosting formula *Primal Max Black* for free.

"If you want passionate 'rip your clothes off' sex you had in your younger days, you need nitric oxide to get your erection going. And testosterone for energy and drive," says Dr. Sears. "You get both with *Primal Max Red* and *Primal Max Black*."

HOW TO GET PRIMAL MAX

To secure free bottles of *Primal Max Black* and get the hot, new *Primal Max Red* formula, buyers should contact the Sears Health Hotline at 1-800-759-7193 within the next 48 hours. "It's not available in drug stores yet," says Dr. Sears. "The Hotline allows us to ship directly to the customer."

Dr. Sears feels so strongly about *Primal Max*, all orders are backed by a 100% money-back guarantee. "Just send me back the bottle and any unused product within 90 days from purchase date, and I'll send you all your money back," he says.

The Hotline will be open for the next 48 hours. After that, the phone number will be shut down to allow them to restock. Call 1-800-759-7193 to secure your limited supply of *Primal Max Red* and free bottles of *Primal Max Black*. You don't need a prescription, and those who call in the first 24 hours qualify for a significant discount. Use Promo Code NP0620PMAX512 when you call in. Lines are frequently busy, but all calls will be answered.

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OPINION



JOE NEWTON

SAVAGE LOVE

An ex-coworker keeps sexting my man

You're "fine" with flirting, but she won't stop blowing up his phone.

By DAN SAVAGE

Q: I'm committed to my male partner and he's committed to me. (I'm a woman.) But we both understand we need to flirt and that we will both want to sleep with someone else at some point. We live together, we have a dog, and neither of us believes in marriage. We plan to purchase a house in the coming months. Here's the issue: He met a woman at work. He's not sexually attracted to her at all. She, however, would love to blow him. She's in an unhappy marriage and has no friends. They exchanged numbers when my partner was transferred and now she texts him constantly. It doesn't totally bother me. But not only does she text him at all hours of the day and night, but she continuously tells him he's the hottest man she's ever met. She sends him nudes, which I've seen, and wants to suck his "huge dick." (It is huge.) But even though I know he's not sexually attracted to her, I'm still feeling threatened. I have extremely low self-esteem

right now and I'm struggling with depression. I'm speaking with a therapist and I'm on meds. But the meds have made me gain about 50 pounds, which doesn't help with the depression. I get the need and desire to flirt. But right now I'm not confident enough to be OK with him being sexual with another person even if it's just texts. And I feel this way knowing he has no plans to be with her! He continues to tell me he has no desire to spend his life with anyone else but me. Yet he's suddenly hesitant to buy a house. I guess I'm asking WTF should I do? —**DINGING PHONE REALLY EXACERBATING SEMI-SERIOUS DEPRESSION**

A: You say it doesn't bother you—it doesn't *totally* bother you—that this woman texts your partner day and night, DPRESSD, which strikes me as odd. Because that shit would drive me up the wall. Blowing up someone's phone at all hours of the day and night screams "I HAVE

NO BOUNDARIES! I AM INCAPABLE OF BEING CONSIDERATE! I HAVE NO SELF CONTROL!" Even if you were in a place where you felt better about your partner getting some attention elsewhere, the shit this woman is pulling would still be annoying, unsettling, and totally bothersome.

And this shit should be disqualifying—meaning, your partner should've shut this woman down already. He should've told this woman to knock it off and, if she didn't knock it off, he should've told her to fuck the fuck off and blocked her number. If he tried to shut her down and she kept texting him, DPRESSD, then I have to wonder why he hasn't blocked her number already. Assuming he's telling you the truth about not being attracted to her—and it sounds like he is—he may have allowed this to go on because he enjoys feeling desirable and/or he doesn't want to hurt her feelings. If it's the former, make it clear to your partner that you wouldn't

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OPINION

continued from 43
have a problem with him finding someone else to swap flirty sext messages with, so long as it's someone who can sext in moderation and at appropriate times. If it's the latter, DPRESSD, make it clear to your partner that this shit is hurting your feelings and, as his partner, you expect him to prioritize your feelings over his former coworker's feelings.

All that said, DPRESSD, even if the thought of your partner going off to play with another woman didn't make you feel insecure, you wouldn't want your partner getting blown by this particular woman. Even if your partner has never said, "Don't text me at all hours of the day and night," that's no excuse. No one wants their phone or their partner's phone blowing up at 3 AM; that's not a boundary anyone should have to articulate to set and, articulated or not, no one with any common sense would do that. (And, holy crap, if this is how this woman behaves in pursuit of your partner's big cock, how is she gonna behave after she gets a taste?)

As for the house issue, DPRESSD, press your partner to clarify his sudden hesitancy. It may have nothing to do with your relationship; it's entirely possible that he's freaked out by the state of the world—because, my God, who isn't?—and he's having second thoughts about sinking his savings into a house. Depression often puts the worst possible spin on things; it can lead us to reject a calming truth someone is telling us in favor of an alarming lie we're telling ourselves. Don't fall into that trap.

And finally, DPRESSD, please talk to your doctor about switching out your meds. If weight gain is a side effect of the ones you're on now and weight gain is making you more depressed, then it doesn't make sense to keep treating your depression with the meds you're on now. A

different med might give you the same benefits without this particular side effect.

Q: I met someone I connected with during quarantine. We've all but committed to screwing our brains out after we're given the all-clear. But she recently suffered a devastating loss. We will meet, on her terms, most likely very soon. I know I should follow her lead, but should I avoid sex even if she wants to have sex? I don't know if sex will help or hurt. Is being chaste and supportive the right move? Can sex help in a time of loss? I just don't want to be the asshole someone winds up writing to you for advice about.

—LOOKING OVER SEXUAL TIMING

A: Follow her lead—that's a good impulse—and if she wants to have sex after you've met in person and after you've made it clear to her that there's no rush, LOST, and if you want to have sex after you've met her in person, go ahead and have sex. Some people find sex after a devastating loss to be healing and affirming and the last thing that person needs is for someone else to decide they shouldn't be having sex or even wanting to have sex. As for the all-clear you're waiting for, well, that could be a long time off, seeing as COVID-19 rates are spiking all over the country. If you decide you can't wait for the all-clear, please consult the New York Health Department's safer sex/harm-reduction recommendations for people who want to have sex during this pandemic. (Google "New York Health," "coronavirus," and "sex.") To quickly summarize: you can minimize your risk of contracting or transmitting COVID-19 by wearing a mask, not eating ass, using condoms, and using a glory hole.

Q: I've been dating someone

long distance for seven months. I've been transparent about my need for an open relationship. Recently this gentleman asked me to tell him if I slept with someone else. I agreed because I'm not sleeping with anyone at the moment due to COVID-19. But since March, I've been having phone sex with a long-term booty call who lives across the country. Neither knows about the other and neither one knows I'm bisexual. No big deal, right? I'm a first responder in a male-dominated field and I put up with enough bullshit without the men in my life knowing I eat pussy. How much of an asshole am I for not disclosing what I don't need to? **—NOT BANGING (OTHER) DUDES**

A: You're being an asshole—to yourself. Hiding your bisexuality from the men you're dating increases your odds of winding up in a relationship with someone who judges, shames, or hates you for being bisexual, NBOD, and why on earth would you want to do that to yourself? Disclosing your bisexuality ups your odds of attracting a guy who fetishizes your bisexuality, of course, but it's easier to weed those guys out early than it is to leave (or divorce) some guy who reveals himself to be biphobic after you've made a huge emotional investment in him. As for the phone sex . . . you should disclose that too. If Mr. Seven Months can't handle you having phone sex with some other guy, NBOD, he certainly won't be able to handle you sleeping with someone else. And if he can't handle that, he's not the right guy for a woman who wants/needs/requires an open relationship. **fi**

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clarify project goals, to identify problems and suggest changes, identifying and gathering user requirements, analyzing user and customer needs and software requirements to determine the feasibility of the design. Mail résumé to Amgaabaatar Purevjal, iCodice LLC, 5005 Newport Dr, Suite# 505, Rolling Meadows, IL 60008

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PERSONALS

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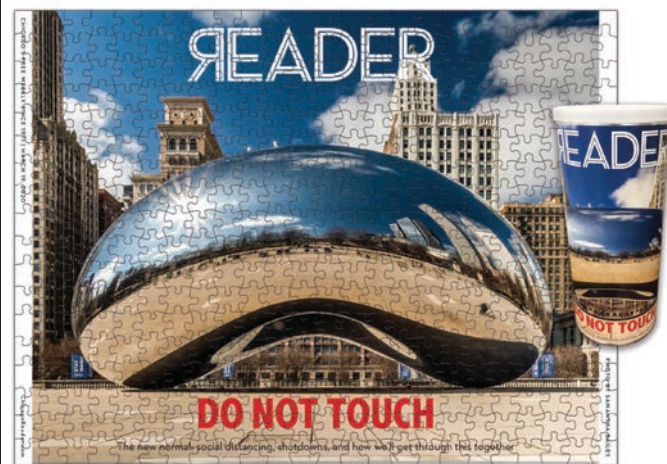
GNR reports Britney Beach, A. Rose & S. Tyler was seen at outdoor cafe. with Tori S. Claudia S. C. Brinkley. C Diaz, Reese W. then came M. Crue. Gladiss Glover. B. Sabbath, & ACDC came later. Gunna! G. Durran. Love & Kisses Tracy Guns - Hollywood Rose Guns N Rose 312-206-0867 773-323-5173

Dominick D. rocks Lia Lakely as Paul M. & Wings, D. Cassidy S. Bono, & Cher, Britney S. Izzy A. S. Vai, Ozzy, Sabbath Billeish, A. Grande. Friends, & C. Applegate, Fun with Guns N Roses, Aerosmith, M. Crew. J. Bieber, L. GaGa Forever Britney Beach Hollywood Rose Tracy Guns 312-206-0867 773-323-5173

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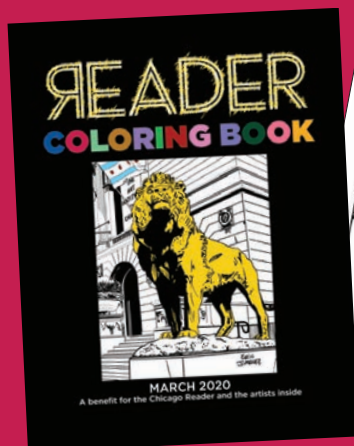
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